

Loreburn Group  
**Code of Conduct  
For  
Governing Body Members**



**Creating Great Places to Live**

<b>Policy</b>	Code of Conduct							
<b>Version Reference</b>	2							
<b>Approved by</b>	MC	X		LET			MT	
<b>Date of Approval</b>	August 2022							
<b>Review Period</b>	Every 3 Years <b>or</b> as legislation or substantive changes occur							
<b>Review Due</b>	August 2025							
<b>Policy Champion</b>	Chief Executive							
<b>Who this policy affects</b>	MC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contractors	<input type="checkbox"/>	Members of the Public	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Where this policy affects</b>	General needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Later Living	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supported	<input type="checkbox"/>	Offices/staff base	<input type="checkbox"/>

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# 1. Introduction

1.1. All members of the committee must sign this Code of Conduct when they are elected, co-opted or appointed, and on an annual basis thereafter. References throughout this Code of Conduct (the Code) to 'we', 'us' and 'our' mean Loreburn Housing Association. The Code reflects our Values which are:



1.2 We attach the greatest importance to ensuring that high standards of governance and ethical behaviour are demonstrated by all of our people and in all of our activities.

1.3 Our Code of Conduct sets out the requirements and expectations which are attached to your role as a member of our committee. You have a personal responsibility to uphold the requirements of our Code. You cannot be a member of the committee<sup>1</sup> if you do not agree to adopt our Code of Conduct. To confirm that you understand its requirements and accept its terms, you must review and sign this Code annually.

1.4 As a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), we are required to adopt and comply with

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<sup>1</sup> Our Rules state that the committee can remove a member who fails to sign the Code of Conduct (Rule 44.5.2); it is a regulatory requirement that our Rules enable the committee to take such action (SHR Regulatory Framework (2019) Constitutional Standard 19

an appropriate Code of Conduct<sup>2</sup>. Our Code is based on the Model Code of Conduct produced by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, which the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has confirmed fully complies with its Regulatory Standards.

- 1.5 Our Code of Conduct is an important part of our governance arrangements; it is supported by the Role description which describes your responsibilities as a committee member. You are responsible for ensuring that you are familiar with the terms of this Code and that you always act in accordance with its requirements and expectations. Committee members must always ensure their actions accord with the legal duties of the RSL and with regulatory guidance. You must also ensure you are familiar with any policies which are linked to this code.
- 1.6 If there is a concern that a member of the committee may have breached any part of this Code, the matter will be investigated in accordance with the Protocol that we have adopted. A serious breach of our Code may result in action being taken by the committee to remove the committee member(s) involved.
- 1.7 This Code of Conduct was adopted by our committee in August 2022.

## **2. Who Our Code Applies To**

- 2.1 Our Code of Conduct applies to all elected, appointed and co-opted members of our committee **and its sub-committees and to the governing bodies of all subsidiaries and members of the Loreburn Group.**

## **3. How Our Code Is Structured**

- 3.1 Our Code of Conduct is based on the seven principles which are recognised as providing a framework for good governance. They demonstrate honesty, integrity and probity.<sup>3</sup>
- 3.2 Each principle is described, as it applies to the activities of Loreburn Housing Association and its committee members, and supporting guidance is offered for each to provide more explanation of our Code's requirements. The guidance is not exhaustive and it should be remembered that Loreburn Housing Association and our committee members are responsible for ensuring that their conduct at all times meets the high standards that the RSL sector is recognised for upholding.

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<sup>2</sup> Scottish Housing Regulator (2019) Regulatory Framework, [Regulatory Standard 5.2](#)

<sup>3</sup> Committee for Standards in Public Life (May 1995), [Nolan Principles](#)

3.2 The seven principles that you must adhere and commit to by signing this Code are:

A. **Selflessness**

B. **Openness**

C. **Honesty**

D. **Objectivity**

E. **Integrity**

F. **Accountability**

G. **Leadership**

## **A. Selflessness**

You must act in the best interests of Loreburn HA at all times and must take decisions that support and promote our strategic plan, aims and objectives. Members of the committee should not promote the interests of a particular group or body of opinion to the exclusion of others.

- A.1** I will always uphold and promote Loreburn HA's aims, objectives and values and act to ensure their successful achievement
- A.2** I will exercise the authority that comes with my role as a committee member responsibly
- A.3** I will accept responsibility for all decisions properly reached by the committee (or a sub-committee or working group with appropriately delegated responsibility) and support them at all times, even if I did not agree with the decision when it was made.
- A.4** I will consider and respect the views of others.
- A.5** I will not seek to use my position inappropriately to influence decisions that are the responsibility of staff.
- A.6** I will not seek to use my influence inappropriately or for personal gain or advantage or for the benefit of someone to whom I am closely connected<sup>4</sup> or their business interests.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1, p13-15 for definition of "closely connected"

## **B. Openness**

You must be transparent in all of your actions; you must declare and record all relevant personal and business interests and must be able to explain your actions.

- B.1** I will use my best endeavours and exercise reasonable skill and care in the conduct of my duties.
- B.2** I will avoid any situation that could give rise to suspicion or suggest improper conduct.
- B.3** I will declare any personal interest(s) and manage openly and appropriately any conflicts of interest; I will observe the requirements of our policy on the matter. I will keep my entry in the Register of Interests complete, accurate and up to date. I will make an annual statement to confirm my declarations are accurate.
- B.4** I will not accept any offers of gifts or hospitality from individuals or organisations which might reasonably create – or be capable of creating – an impression of impropriety or influence or place me under an obligation to these individuals or organisations. I will comply with Loreburn HA's policy on Entitlements, Payments and Benefits.
- B.5** I will ensure that, in carrying out my role as a committee member, I am informed about and take account of the views, needs and demands of tenants and service users
- B.6** I will ensure that Loreburn HA is open about the way in which it conducts its affairs and positive about how it responds to requests for information.
- B.7** I will not prevent people or bodies from being provided with information that they are entitled to receive.



## **C. Honesty**

You must ensure that you always act in the best interests of the organisation and that all activities are transparent and accountable.

- C.1** I will always act honestly and in good faith when undertaking my responsibilities as a committee member.
- C.2** I will use my experience, skills, knowledge and judgement effectively to support our activities.
- C.3** I will ensure that decisions are always taken and recorded in accordance with our Rules and procedures.
- C.4** I will ensure that Loreburn HA has an effective whistleblowing policy and procedures to enable, encourage and support any staff or committee member to report any concerns they have about possible fraud, corruption or other wrongdoing.<sup>5</sup>
- C.5** I will report any concerns or suspicions about possible fraud, corruption or other wrongdoing to the appropriate senior person within the organisation in accordance with our whistleblowing policy.
- C.6** I will comply with our policies and procedures regarding the use of our funds and resources<sup>6</sup> and I will not misuse, contribute to or condone the misuse of these resources.
- C.7** We forbid all forms of bribery, meaning a financial or other advantage or inducement intended to persuade someone to perform improperly any function or activity. I will neither accept from nor give bribes or any other inducement to anyone. I will comply with our policy on bribery will report any instances of suspected bribery or corruption within the organisation or any of its business partners.
- C.8** I will ensure that neither I nor someone closely connected to me receives or is seen to receive preferential treatment relating to any services provided by the organisation or its contractors/suppliers. I will declare all interests openly and ensure they are effectively managed to demonstrate this.

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<sup>5</sup> These concerns might include, but are not confined to, suspected fraud, dishonesty, breach of the law, poor practice, non-compliance with regulatory requirements, misconduct, breach of this code.

<sup>6</sup> Resources include people, equipment, buildings, ICT, funds, knowledge, stationery, transport

## **D. Objectivity**

You must consider all matters on their merits; you must base your decisions on the information and advice available and reach your decision independently.

- D.1** I will ensure that the decisions that I take are consistent with our aims and objectives and with the relevant legal and regulatory requirements (including those of the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, the Financial Conduct Authority and the Care Inspectorate).
- D.2** I will prepare effectively for meetings and ensure I have access to all necessary information to enable me to make well-informed decisions.
- D.3** I will monitor performance carefully to ensure that the organisation's purpose and objectives are achieved, and take timely and effective action to identify and address any weaknesses or failures.
- D.4** I will use my skills, knowledge and experience to review information critically and always take decisions in the best interests of the organisation, our tenants and our service users.
- D.5** I will ensure that the committee seeks and takes account of additional information and external/independent and/or specialist advice where necessary and/or appropriate.
- D.6** I will ensure that effective policies and procedures are implemented so that all decisions are based on an adequate assessment of risk, deliver value for money, and ensure the financial well-being of the organisation.
- D.7** I will contribute to the identification of training needs, keep my knowledge up to date, and participate in ongoing training that is organised or supported by us.

## **E. Integrity**

You must actively support and promote our values; you must not be influenced by personal interest in exercising your role and responsibilities.

- E.1** I will always treat my committee colleagues our staff, our customers and partners with respect and courtesy
- E.2** I will always conduct myself in a courteous and professional manner; I will not, by my actions or behaviour, cause distress, alarm or offence.
- E.3** I will publicly support and promote our decisions, actions and activities; I will not, by my actions or behaviour, compromise or contradict the organisation, its activities, values, aims or objectives. I will notify the Convener quickly if I become aware of any situation or event that I am associated with which could affect Loreburn HA and/or its reputation
- E.4** I will fulfil my responsibilities as they are set out in the relevant role description(s); I will maintain relationships that are professional, constructive and that do not conflict with my role as a committee member.
- E.5** I will comply with, support and promote our policies relating to equalities, diversity and human rights as well as uphold our whistleblowing and acceptable use<sup>7</sup> policies.
- E.6** I will respect confidentiality and ensure that I do not disclose information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it, both whilst I am a member of the committee and after I have left.
- E.7** I will observe and uphold the legal requirements and our policies in respect of the storage and handling of information, including personal and financial information.

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<sup>7</sup> This relates to the use of ICT, social media and networking, facilities etc., and is specific to each individual RSL.

## **F. Accountability**

You must take responsibility for and be able to explain your actions, and demonstrate that your contribution to our governance is effective.

- F.1** I will observe and uphold the principles and requirements of the SHR's Regulatory Framework, and gain assurance that relevant statutory and regulatory guidance and Loreburn HA's legal obligations are fulfilled.
- F.2** I will ensure that we have effective systems in place to monitor and report our performance and that corrective action is taken as soon as the need is identified.
- F.3** I will contribute positively to our activities by regularly attending and participating constructively in meetings of the committee, its committees and working groups.
- F.4** I will participate in and contribute to an annual review of the contribution I have made to our governance.
- F.5** I will ensure that there is an appropriate system in place for the support and appraisal of our Senior Officer and that it is implemented effectively.
- F.6** I will not speak or comment in public on our behalf without specific authority to do so.
- F.7** I will co-operate with any investigations or inquiries instructed in connection with this Code whilst I am a committee member and after I have left.
- F.8** I recognise that the Governing Body as a whole is accountable to its tenants and service users, and I will demonstrate this in exercising my judgement and in my decision-making.

## **G. Leadership**

You must uphold our principles and commitment to delivering good outcomes for tenants and other service users, and lead the organisation by example.

- G.1** I will ensure that our strategic aims, objectives and activities deliver good outcomes for tenants and service users. I will make an effective contribution to our strategic leadership.
- G.2** I will ensure that our aims and objectives reflect and are informed by the views of tenants and service users.
- G.3** I will always be a positive ambassador for the organisation.
- G.4** I will participate in and contribute to the annual review of the Governing Body's effectiveness and help to identify and attain the range of skills that we need to meet our strategic objectives.
- G.5** I will not criticise or undermine the organisation or our actions in public.
- G.6** I will not criticise staff in public; I will discuss any staffing related concerns privately with the Convener and/or Senior Officer.
- G.7** I will not harass, bully or attempt to intimidate anyone.
- G.8** I will not use social media to criticise or make inappropriate comments about the organisation, its actions or any member of the committee, staff or other partners.
- G.9** I will not act in a way that could jeopardise our reputation or bring us into disrepute.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This includes activities on social media, blogs and networking sites.

#### **4. Breach of this Code**

- 4.1 I recognise that each member of the committee has a personal and individual responsibility to promote and uphold the requirements of this Code. If I believe that I may have breached the Code, or I have witnessed or become aware of a potential breach by another member, I will immediately bring the matter to the attention of the Convener.

#### **5. Acceptance and Signature**

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understood the terms of this Code of Conduct and I agree to uphold its requirements in all my activities as a member of our committee. I am aware that I must declare and manage any personal interests. I agree to review all relevant Registers regularly to ensure that all entries relating to me are accurate. I understand that, if I am found to have breached this Code of Conduct, action will be taken by the committee which could result in my removal.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 1 - Protocol for Managing an Alleged/Suspected Breach of Code of Conduct

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This protocol will be used by Loreburn HA to deal with any alleged breaches of our Code of Conduct for Governing Body Members. It is based on the Model Protocol provided by SFHA.

### 2. Who is Responsible?

- 2.1 The Convener has delegated authority to deal with all potential breaches of the Code, unless the allegation relates to him/her. In that event, the Vice Convener should take on the responsibilities that the protocol allocates to the Convener. It may be necessary to ask other members of the committee to take on responsibilities should the allegation relate to both the Convener and Vice Convener.
- 2.2 The Convener should consult with other office-bearers (or members of the committee) to instruct, progress and conclude internal and external investigations carried out in accordance with this protocol.
- 2.3 The Scheme of Delegation identifies who has primary responsibility for overseeing the management of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct:

<b>Delegated Authority to Oversee Potential Breaches</b>	Any two from the following (must include at least one COMMITTEE member)
Committee	Convener, Vice-Convener, Investigation Sub-Committee (as approved by the committee)
Senior Staff	CEO, Director (with support from the Head of Governance & Assurance).

- 2.4 No one who is directly involved in a matter that gives rise to a concern that there may have been a breach of the Code of Conduct should be involved in reviewing or managing/conducting an investigation of the matter. Consequently, it may be necessary to ask other members of the committee to take on the responsibilities that the Protocol allocates to the Convener and other office bearers.
- 2.5 The Convener may seek advice from our solicitors in exercising all of the responsibilities associated with this protocol.

### 3. What Constitutes a Breach?

- 3.1 A breach of the Code of Conduct is a serious matter. This Protocol is a process that will apply to managing and/or responding to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct.

Breaches can include:

- Conduct by a committee member during a meeting (which might involve a member being obstructive, offensive or disregarding the authority of the Convener or failing to observe Standing Orders)
- Complaints that the conduct of a committee Member has failed to meet the requirements of the Code of Conduct; is contrary to Loreburn HA's Values, Rules or policies; threatens the reputation of Loreburn HA; risks bringing the organisation into disrepute or undermines Loreburn HA and/or its people
- Inappropriate behaviour towards colleagues, staff, customers or partners

3.2 Some complaints and/or concerns may relate to relatively minor matters, whilst other may involve more significant issues. Consequently, different approaches are likely to be appropriate, depending on the details of individual circumstances, recognising that it may not always be appropriate to undertake a formal investigation in response to an isolated and/or relatively minor issue.

#### **4. Initial Review to Determine if Further Investigation Required**

4.1 When a complaint is received or a concern is raised, consideration should be given as to which is the most appropriate course of action. This may (but may not) require some initial review of the complaint or allegations before concluding on a specific approach. The review should be carried out by those members of the committee appointed in accordance with 2.2 of this Protocol, with support from the Chief Executive or Director if required.

4.2 It may be that such a review concludes that there is no substance to the concern or allegation. Depending on the circumstances, it may be appropriate to report the outcome of such a review to the committee. This might be the case, for example, if an anonymous complaint is received which cannot be investigated because of a lack of information.

4.3 Anonymous complaints or allegations can be difficult to resolve but, in the event that anonymous information is received or made known, an initial review should be undertaken to establish whether there is the potential for any substance to the concern. If so, an investigation should be undertaken, although it is recognised that it may not be possible to conclude any such investigation satisfactorily.

4.4 Minor issues, actions or conduct at an internal meeting or event are unlikely to constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct that warrant investigation. The Convener (and other office bearers) should exercise their judgement in determining which of the courses of action set out in this Protocol is more appropriate.

4.5 Two routes are described in this Protocol: Route A and Route B.

4.6 SHR requires that alleged breaches of the Code which are to be investigated under either Route A or Route B must be regarded as Notifiable Events, in accordance with the terms of the SHR's Statutory Guidance. The Convener is responsible for ensuring that the necessary notifications are made to the Scottish Housing Regulator, and that the SHR's requirements (as set out in the relevant guidance<sup>9</sup>) in terms of reporting the outcome of

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<sup>9</sup> Scottish Housing Regulator (2019) [Notifiable Events guidance](#)



the investigation are met.

## **5. Route A**

- 5.1 Route A is an internal and informal process to address potential minor breaches. This is intended to be a relatively informal process, used to address e.g. one-off discourtesy at an internal meeting, isolated or uncharacteristic failure to follow policy.
- 5.2 Alleged breaches that occur during the course of a meeting or other internal event (and which have not happened before) will, unless the Convener believes it to be serious, be dealt with by the Convener / Chair of the meeting, either during the meeting/event and/or within 24 hours of the meeting. In these circumstances, the Convener/Chair may ask the member to leave the meeting or a vote may be taken to exclude the member from the rest of the meeting.
- 5.3 After the meeting, the Convener or sub-committee Chair will discuss such behaviour with the member and may require the member to apologise or take such other action as may be appropriate (Route A). Where the Convener regards such behaviour as being serious, it should be investigated in accordance with Route B as will repeated incidents of a similar nature.
- 5.4 It may be appropriate for the Convener to record the terms of the discussion in a letter to the committee member e.g. to confirm the provision of training or support or to record a commitment to uphold a specific policy or to record an apology.
- 5.5 It is possible that a concern that it is initially agreed can be addressed via route A ends up being the subject of a formal investigation, if more significant issues emerge, or actions are repeated.

## **6. Route B**

- 6.1 Route B will involve formal investigation of repeated breaches or an alleged significant/major breach. Investigations may be conducted internally or independently, according to the circumstances and people involved.
- 6.2 An investigation under Route B will usually be overseen by the Convener and another office-bearer or committee member.
- 6.3 The Convener or office-bearer, in consultation with the other office-bearers, will decide whether to instruct an independent investigation or carry out an internal investigation.
- 6.4 In the event that the Convener or other office-bearer is the subject of a complaint, an independent investigation should be conducted, overseen by the Vice-Convener and another committee member.
- 6.5 If the Convener is likely to be involved in an investigation (e.g. as a witness), it will be necessary for the office bearers to consider who should be involved in overseeing the investigation.
- 6.6 The Chief Executive can support the implementation of the Protocol (unless involved in the issue, in which case the role should be assigned to another executive member of

staff).

- 6.7 Our scheme of delegation identifies who has primary responsibility for overseeing the management of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct (see section 2.3)
- 6.8 Allegations of a potential breach should normally be made to the Convener or, where the complaint relates to the Convener, to another office-bearer. Where a complaint is made to the Chief Executive the matter should immediately be notified to the Convener.
- 6.9 Alleged breaches may be the subject of written complaints or allegations; they may also be witnessed by someone. However the alleged breach is identified, the Convener and Secretary should ensure that there is always a written statement of the complaint or allegation that is used as the basis for the investigation. If no written complaint is made, the statement of the matter should be prepared by someone unconnected to the event/situation (e.g. a verbal complaint made by a committee member should be recorded by someone who was not present when the issue arose – this could be a member of staff).
- 6.10 The committee member who is the subject of the complaint/allegation that is to be investigated will be notified in writing of the alleged breach within seven working days, either of occurring or of receipt of the complaint. A committee member who is subject to an investigation should take leave of absence until the matter is resolved. Rule 37.8 of the 2020 Model Rules contain the provisions to secure this. The letter will inform the committee member of the nature of the potential breach, the arrangements for the investigation and will advise that leave of absence will be in place for the duration of the investigation. Committee members are expected to co-operate with such investigations<sup>10</sup>.
- 6.11 An alleged breach of the Code of Conduct which is being dealt with via Route B will be notified to the committee, normally by the Convener or Secretary, within seven working days, either of occurring or of receipt of the complaint. The notice (which should be confidential) will not describe the detail of the complaint and will set out the proposed arrangements for investigation, including who will conduct the investigation and which members of the committee are responsible for its oversight.
- 6.12 The appointment of an external Investigator (when it is decided to be the appropriate response) should be approved by the committee members responsible for overseeing the investigation.
- 6.13 An internal investigation (when it is decided to be the appropriate response) will be carried out by at least two and not more than three Members of the committee who are not responsible for overseeing the investigation. In selecting the committee members, we will seek to ensure that the investigators represent the profile of the committee.

## **7. Investigation Under Route B**

- 7.1 The conduct of an investigation should remain confidential, as far as possible, in order to protect those involved (witnesses, complainant(s)) and the committee member(s) who

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<sup>10</sup> Code of Conduct F7

are the subject of the complaint.

- 7.2 All investigations will be objective and impartial. Investigations will normally be investigated by an independent person, unless it is decided that an internal investigation is appropriate.
- 7.3 Investigations should not usually take more than six weeks to conclude.
- 7.4 The investigator(s) will be supported by the Chief Executive (or other executive member of staff if the Chief Executive is involved in the complaint). The Convener and other office-bearer, with any support they feel necessary, will brief the agreed advisor/investigator and then consider their recommendations at the end of the investigation, before reporting to the Governing Body.
- 7.5 All investigations will be the subject of a written brief which sets out the committee's requirements and which includes the statement of the alleged breach (scope, timescale, reporting requirements, access to information etc.). The brief may refer to any action previously taken that is relevant.
- 7.6 All investigations will include at least one interview with the committee member who is the subject of the allegation, who will be invited to provide any relevant information. The interview(s) may be conducted face to face or remotely (by telephone or video call). Committee members may be accompanied during an interview by a friend (at their request), as a companion to provide support and not to represent. It is not appropriate for another current or former committee member to fulfil this role nor is it appropriate for the RSL to meet any costs (other than reasonable expenses as provided for in the relevant policy) in respect of a companion's attendance.

## **8. Considering the Outcome of the Investigation**

- 8.1 The advisor/investigator will normally present their report to the committee. Before doing so, the report will be reviewed by those overseeing the investigation to ensure that the Brief has been met and that the report is adequate to support the committee's consideration and decision making.
- 8.2 The committee member whose conduct is being investigated will not be party to any of the discussions relating to the investigation.
- 8.3 The report will be considered at a meeting of the committee, which may be called specifically for this purpose. It is the responsibility of the committee to consider the report and findings from the investigation and to determine:
- Whether there has been a breach
  - How serious a breach is
  - What action should be taken
- 8.4 The committee will report the findings of the investigation and the proposed action to the member concerned within seven days of the meeting at which the report of the investigation was considered.

## **9. Action to Deal with a Breach**

- 9.1 If, following investigation, a breach of the Code is confirmed, action will be taken in response. This action will reflect the seriousness of the circumstances. It may take the form of some or all of the following:
- A discussion with the member concerned (which may be confirmed in a subsequent letter)
  - advice and assistance on how their conduct can be improved
  - the offer of training or other form of support
  - a formal censure (e.g.in the form of a letter setting out the conclusions, expressing concern and specifying that there must be improvement / no repetition etc)
  - a vote to remove the Member from the committee.
- 9.2 Where, it is concluded that a serious breach has occurred, the committee may require the member to stand down from their position in accordance with the Rules.
- 9.3 If the committee proposes to remove a member, following investigation, the member will have the right to address the full committee before their decision is taken at a special meeting called for that purpose. Any such decision must be approved by a majority of the remaining members of the committee in accordance with Rule<sup>11</sup> (44.5)
- 9.4 A record of the outcome of an investigation will be retained by the Head of Governance & Assurance.
- 9.5 The outcome of any investigation will be notified to the Scottish Housing Regulator, in accordance with the requirements of the Notifiable Events Statutory Guidance.

## 10. Definitions

- 10.1 **Loreburn HA** will regard the following actions as a “serious breach” of the Code of Conduct (this list is not exhaustive):
- Failure to act in our best interests and/or acting in a way that undermines or conflicts with the purposes for which we operate.
  - Support for, or participation in, any initiative, activity or campaign which directly or indirectly undermines or prejudices our interests or those of our service users, or our contractual obligations.
  - Accepting a bribe or inducement from a third party designed to influence the decisions we make.
  - Consistent or serious failure to observe the terms of the Code of Conduct.
  - Serious inappropriate behaviour towards a colleague, member of staff, tenant, customer, partner or stakeholder

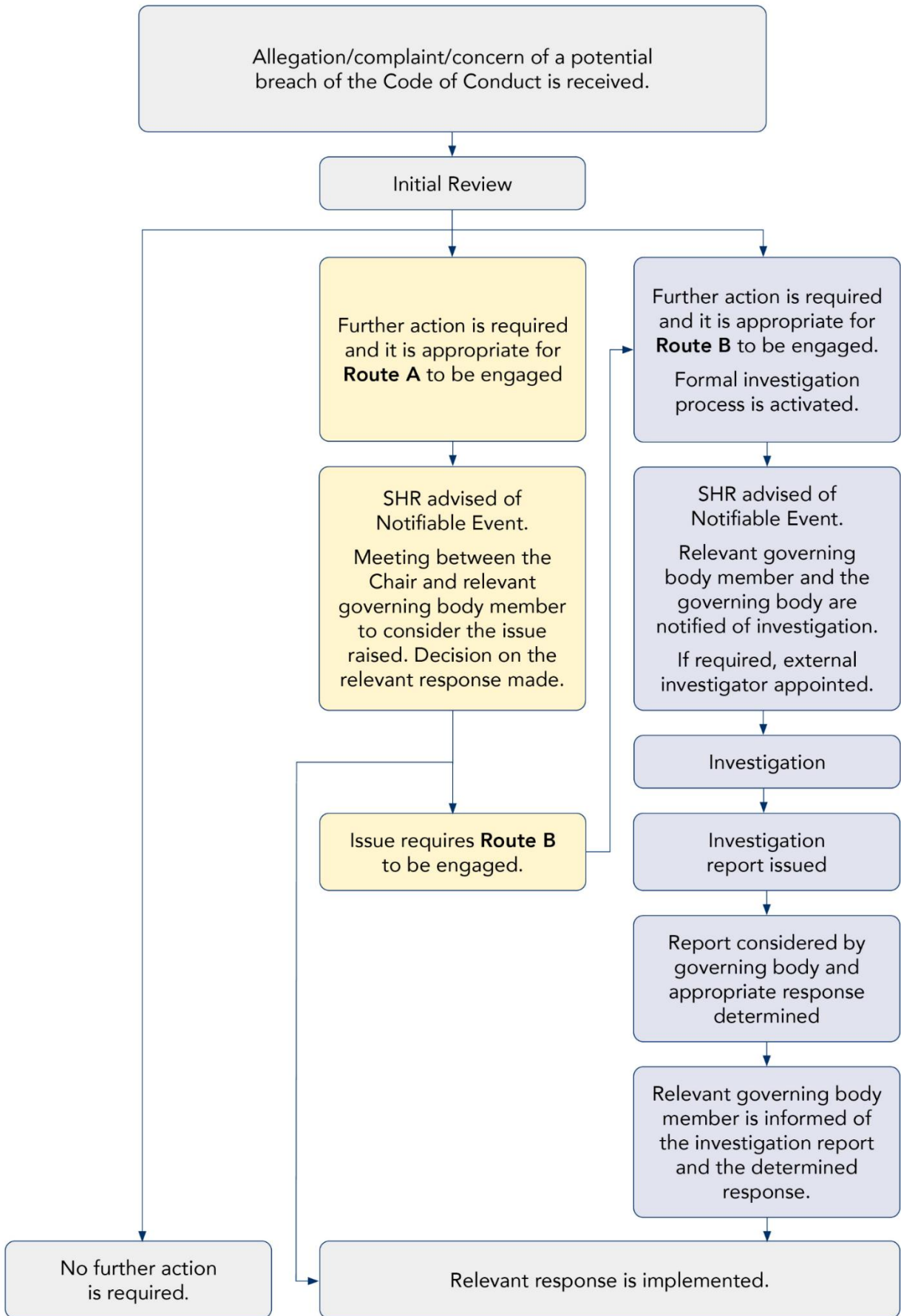
## 11. Approval and Review

- 11.1 This protocol was approved by the committee of Loreburn HA in August 2022.

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<sup>11</sup> SFHA Model Rules (2020)

Appendix 2 – Flowchart Summarising Protocol Process



## Appendix 3 – Guidance on Implementing Model Protocol

### **Guidance on Implementing Model Protocol**

This Appendix has been produced to support the implementation of the Model Protocol at Appendix 1 which can be used when a potential breach of the Code of Conduct has been identified.

The Model Protocol sets out a process to deal with and respond to concerns and complaints about alleged failures to comply with and/or potential breaches of the Code of Conduct.

### **Who Implements the Protocol? (section 2 of the Protocol)**

Concerns about a governing body member's conduct should be communicated to the Convener who is then responsible for deciding how to proceed and leading the agreed process. On becoming aware of a concern, the Convener should, in consultation with other office bearers decide on the appropriate way forward.

If the Convener is the subject of the complaint or allegation, the Vice-Convener should lead the process, unless they are also involved. In that event, the other office bearers should take the lead; and if that isn't possible, two other members of the governing body should do so (e.g. members of the People & Culture Sub- Committee).

No one who is directly involved in a matter that gives rise to a concern that there may have been a breach of the Code of Conduct should be involved in reviewing or managing/conducting an investigation of the matter. Consequently, it may be necessary to ask other members of the governing body to take on the responsibilities that the Protocol allocates to the Convener and other office bearers. Delegated authorities should be sufficiently flexible/comprehensive to support this.

The senior officer will normally provide support to the Convener in implementing the protocol, although this role may be undertaken by another executive member of staff or by an officer with specific governance responsibility (e.g. Head of Governance & Assurance).

The Scheme of Delegation should make provision for the implementation of the protocol so that there is an agreed list of authorised people to implement the process.

### **Describing or Defining the Complaint (section 3 of Protocol)**

It is important that there is clarity about what the concern is or the nature of the complaint. Although the complaint or concern may not, initially, be in writing, the issue should always be recorded to ensure there is clarity and agreement about the issue. This may be achieved e.g. by the Convener producing a note of what has been reported to them or by the Chief Executive preparing the note.

Some examples might be:

- During a conversation, a concern is raised with the Convener by a governing body member about the conduct of another governing body member at an external event. The Convener subsequently produces a short note describing the conversation/concern which forms the basis of discussion with the office bearers about how to proceed;
- The Chief Executive has concerns about the conduct of a governing body member towards staff which they communicate to the Convener in an e-mail; this becomes the basis for discussion between the Convener and the office-bearers about how to proceed;
- A written complaint is received about the conduct of a governing body member

## **When to Use the Protocol (section 4 of the Protocol)**

If a concern is raised, the first step is to establish whether there is sufficient information to proceed and, if there is, to determine which route is most appropriate. The Model Protocol provides for an initial review (see Section 4) and it is important to stress that this is not a 'mini-investigation'. This should simply be a swift overview of the concern/complaint to establish which is the most appropriate course of action. This could be undertaken by the officer supporting the Convener and is likely to be especially relevant in the event that an anonymous complaint or allegation is made. The purpose of such a review is to

- (a) clarify the complaint/concern/allegation;
- (b) determine whether there is sufficient information to take the matter forward;
- (c) if there is, agree which of the two 'routes' described in the protocol is the most appropriate. This element of the review should always involve the Convener.

If this review concludes that there is nothing to support the matter being pursued (e.g. because the concerns are vague and/or because the anonymity of the allegation(s) make further investigation impossible or because the complaint is obviously malicious), no further action should be taken.

If there is agreement that sufficient information is (or is likely to be) available, a decision should be taken by the Convener as to the appropriate process to respond to the concern.

## **Routes of Investigation**

It is the responsibility of the Convener to determine the most appropriate course of action. The Model Protocol is clear that not every concern justifies formal action. It describes two 'routes' – A and B.

**Route A** is essentially an informal response to a relatively minor issue e.g. minor discourtesy; inadvertent omission which does not have serious implications; lack of awareness of the impact of a comment; insensitivity towards another person; lack of knowledge in a significant area of the governing body's business. Such matters can appropriately be addressed in a conversation between the Convener and the governing body member concerned and may result in an apology being made and/or training provided. This is described at Section 5 of the Protocol.

For all other concerns, a more formal approach should be adopted as described in **Route B** of the Model Protocol and an investigation carried out. This is described at Section 6 of the Protocol.

Appendix 2 provides a flow chart summarising the process under Route A and Route B.

## **Who Should Be Informed that the Protocol is Being Implemented?**

If either Route A or Route B of the Protocol is implemented, the governing body member whose conduct is being questioned should be informed about the nature of the concern/allegation and the process by which it is to be dealt with. The governing body member should be informed if leave of absence is to be taken and of the likely timescale for the conduct of the process. If there is any change to this timescale, they should be informed. A template letter for this purpose is included at Appendix 4.

The person making the complaint should be informed that the matter is being investigated and should also be informed of the outcome.

If **Route B** of the Protocol is being implemented, the governing body member should be informed that a complaint has been received, that the Protocol is being implemented and that the governing body member involved should take a leave of absence. Rule 37.8 of the SFHA Model Rules 2020 provides that the governing body can require a governing body member who is the subject of an investigation to take leave of absence until the investigation is complete and the matter has been concluded. If the Convener believes that this is NOT necessary, the governing body should be advised of the reason(s).

A Notifiable Event (NE) should be submitted to the **SHR** providing details of the allegation/complaint and the process by which it is to be investigated in line with the SHR Notifiable Events Guidance.

### **Investigation Under Route B (section 7 of Protocol)**

Under Route B, the investigation may be either internal or independent, but complaints involving the Convener or any other office-bearer should always be investigated independently.

For either, a brief should be prepared, and a template for this purpose is included at Appendix 5.

- **Internal Investigation**

Internal investigations will only be appropriate in very limited circumstances. Exceptionally, if an RSL is considering carrying out an internal investigation, it must satisfy itself that all of the following apply:

- the investigation cannot give rise to any conflict of interest (present or future) given the working relationship that exists between governing body members;
- there is no potential for future working relationships to be compromised by an internal investigation being undertaken;
- the concern or complaint relates to a straightforward matter;
- the investigation is unlikely to be extensive;
- all of the required specialist skills are available in-house.

If undertaking an internal investigation, an investigating officer(s) should be appointed. This must be someone who has no knowledge of the matter to be investigated and who does not normally work closely with the governing body member(s) concerned. Please note that the investigating officer should not be a staff member because they would in effect be investigating their employer, which would represent a conflict of interests. For these reasons, in most cases an independent investigation is more appropriate under Route B.

- **Independent Investigation**

An independent investigator should be appointed. The brief should be issued and responses invited. Your solicitors, internal auditors, other external advisers and other RSLs may be able to suggest suitable people to approach.



An alternative might be to consider whether it would be appropriate to ask someone from another RSL to undertake the investigation. The same considerations listed above in respect of an internal investigation would, of course, apply. There are likely to be additional considerations around reputational impact when considering this possibility.

The Brief should be issued to those selected as being suitable and responses invited. It is not always necessary to seek proposals from more than one source. Often, it will be appropriate to check availability with potential investigators and to issue the brief to those who have indicated their ability to respond within the proposed timescale.

### **Keeping Everyone Informed**

It is important to remember that the conduct of an investigation is likely to be unsettling and potentially stressful for those involved. Care should be taken to ensure that those who are the subject of an investigation are kept informed about its progress. Responsibility for doing this and key 'check-in' points, should be identified at the outset of the process (where possible contact should be made every two weeks). Any delay or change to the process should be communicated swiftly to everyone affected.

### **Considering the Investigation Report (section 8 of Protocol)**

The draft report should be considered by the governing body members responsible for overseeing the investigation. Once they are satisfied that the report meets the terms of the Brief and contains all of the information necessary for the issue to be considered, a governing body meeting should be called. Care should be taken to identify and manage any potential conflicts of interest on the part of other members of the governing body.

The Convener should decide whether or not the report should be issued in advance to the governing body and whether the governing body member concerned should be given access to the report. Individual circumstances will determine the most appropriate approach.

The Investigator will normally be invited to present the report at the meeting and to answer questions but should then leave to enable the governing body to consider the findings, their decision and the proposed response.

### **Determining Appropriate Response (section 9 of the Protocol)**

Although the investigation is intended to establish whether there is sufficient evidence to conclude whether or not a breach of the Code of Conduct has occurred, it is the governing body's responsibility to determine if a breach has actually been committed. It is also the governing body's responsibility to determine how serious a confirmed breach is and what is an appropriate response.

In reaching a decision about the seriousness of a breach, the governing body should take account of its consequences (actual and potential; internal and external). The governing body must exercise good governance and must act in the best interests of the organisation. The response must always be proportionate: not unduly severe but, equally, not capable of being interpreted as overlooking or brushing aside unacceptable conduct. Whilst it is right that mitigating factors should be considered, care should be taken to ensure that decision-making is not unduly influenced by loyalty.

The response will depend on the specifics of the issue but the options can include:

- Request to make an apology: in this case, the governing body should be provided with confirmation that an apology, in appropriate terms, has been given / made

- Requirement to undertake training: the governing body should be informed of the completion of the required training
- Formal censure: the letter stating the outcome of the investigation should include the censure (e.g. “The committee is very disappointed that **XXX** and expects you to ensure that this does not occur again. In the event of any further breaches occurring during the remainder of your term on the board/committee, we may ask you to resign”)
- Request to resign from an office-bearing or representative role
- Request to resign from the governing body
- Removal from the governing body

The decision of the governing body should be communicated to the governing body member as soon after the meeting as possible. It may be appropriate for the Convener to contact the governing body member to provide an initial indication before the formal written decision is issued.

It is possible for an interim meeting to be held, which the governing body member who has breached the Code is invited to attend to respond to the conclusion, before the governing body determines its final response. This is likely to be particularly appropriate if the governing body is minded to seek to remove the governing body member.

If the governing body intends to seek to remove one of its members because of a breach of the Code of Conduct, a special meeting must be called for that specific and sole purpose (Rule 44.5). The process for calling a special meeting is set out at Rule 55.

#### Appendix 4 - Template Letter to Inform Governing Body Member of an Investigation

*This template should be customised to reflect the particular circumstances. Ideally, the governing body member should first be made aware of the issue by the Convener (e.g. by telephone) and the letter is to confirm and formalise the process. It would be appropriate to make reference to the terms of any such phone call e.g. be referring to agreement to take leave of absence and not to discuss the matter. If the Convener is unable to reach the member by telephone and has left a voicemail with no response after 24 hours, the letter will be issued without additional attempts at contact being made.*

Dear

#### **Allegation of a Breach of the Code of Conduct**

I write to inform you of the committee's intention to commission an independent investigation into an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct.

The committee has been made aware that it has been alleged that you [insert details].

This allegation must be independently investigated. The committee is aiming to conclude the matter by [insert target completion date]. Until the outcome of the investigation is confirmed, it is expected that you will take leave of absence from the committee and you should not discuss the matter with anyone other than the Investigator.

Your e-mail address [or other contact details] will be provided to the Investigator so that they can contact you. I will confirm the appointment of the Investigator as soon as possible. I know that you will co-operate fully with the investigation.

The committee is being informed today of the allegation and your leave of absence, as is the SHR.

Your sincerely

Convener

## **Appendix 5 – Brief for the Conduct of an Independent Investigation**

### **Allegation of a Breach of the Code of Conduct Brief for the Conduct of an [Independent] Investigation**

**Background:** [insert details of the concern / allegation or complaint – the written description referred to in the MP]

The committee member has been informed of the allegation and has taken leave of absence. The SHR has been notified.

**Purpose and Scope of the Investigation:** To investigate an allegation that [specific allegation e.g. breach of confidentiality; unacceptable behaviour] and to report to the committee on the findings and conclusions. The investigation should establish the facts of the allegation, determine whether or not the allegation is substantiated and determine whether or not a breach of the Code of Conduct may have occurred. The investigation should report on whatever facts and circumstances are relevant to the allegation and should identify the conclusions reached.

**Conduct of the Investigation:** The investigation should be conducted by means of [e.g. a desk-top review of relevant documents and interviews with relevant people (who should be defined)]. All interviews will be conducted by [e.g. in-person meetings, phone or video-conferencing] and the report will be presented to the Management Committee [e.g. date of the meeting or virtually]. Liaison with Loreburn HA and its representatives will be via [insert details e.g. telephone, other virtual means, meetings].

Two members of Loreburn HA's **committee** (including the Convener) will oversee the conduct of the Investigation; they will be supported by [insert relevant Officer], who will be the primary point of contact for the Investigator.

The Investigator will have full access to all relevant documents and Loreburn HA will assist with administrative arrangements relating to the conduct of the investigation.

**Timescale:** [Specify, including dates by which any drafts are required and taking account of 'normal' expectation that investigations should be concluded within six weeks]

#### **For Independent Investigations Only**

A suitably experienced person is required to undertake an investigation in accordance with this Brief. Proposals should be submitted which outline your experience of similar assignments, your availability and capacity to meet the required timescale and your anticipated fee. Details of potential referees should also be provided (Loreburn HA will inform you before approaching any referee)

Please submit your proposal to [insert details] by [specify]