

Neighbourhood Committee Operating Principles

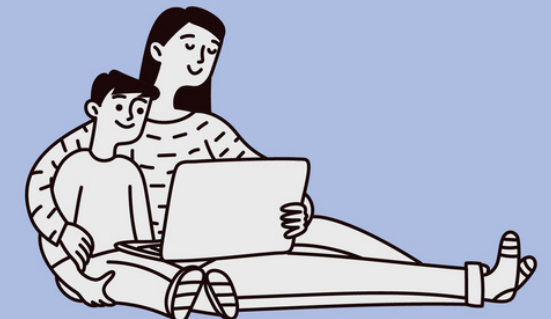
West Earlham & Bowthorpe

Pride in Place

Our neighbourhoods matter



"The best
decisions for a
community are
made by the
people who
live there."



1. Context

Our neighbourhoods matter

West Earlham & Bowthorpe is one of 169 neighbourhoods selected by the UK Government to receive up to £20 million over ten years through the national Pride in Place Programme. That investment is a statement of intent - but money alone doesn't transform places. People do.

This document exists because we believe that how we work together matters as much as what we decide. Local people, with lived experience of this neighbourhood, are in the driving seat. That is not a courtesy - it is the point.

.

2. Purpose

The Board exists to turn what local people say they want into reality - through a ten-year plan that is ambitious, accountable and genuinely resident-led.

It works toward three objectives set by the Pride in Place Programme:

- **Thriving places**
- **Stronger communities**
- **Stronger voices for local people**

The Government provides a menu of possible interventions, but explicitly encourages Neighbourhood Boards to think creatively.

The list is a starting point, not a ceiling.

This document sets out how the Board operates - its principles, how decisions get made, how relationships and trust are built, and how it stays true to what the community says it needs.

3. Our principles

- All voices are welcome*
- We trust people to know what is best for them
- We believe people
- With responsibility comes accountability
- We listen
- We remove barriers - including unnecessary bureaucracy
- We make mistakes and learn
- We build on what is working and local assets
- We are inclusive and accessible
- We are democratic
- We are transparent
- We will consider the climate impact in all our decisions
- Decisions will be underpinned by long-term, democratic and preventative thinking
- We will connect and leverage other partnerships and communities
- We will seek to engage collaboratively across sectors to enable the levers of change
- We will embed buying local, social and sustainable
- *We will stand up to hate in all its forms — including hate speech, discrimination, or online abuse — directed at any person on the basis of their race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, age, or any other characteristic

4. Who We Are

- The West Earlham & Bowthorpe Neighbourhood Board is a group of up to 15 people who have chosen to take responsibility for how £20 million is invested in this neighbourhood over ten years. That is not a small thing.
- Residents form the majority and lead throughout. What matters most is a strong connection to this place and a commitment to making it better - not previous board experience, professional credentials or political office.

4. Who We Are

The Board draws from across the life of the neighbourhood:

- People who live here
- Local businesses and traders
- Voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations
- Faith communities
- Health and wellbeing
- Arts, culture and heritage
- Education and young people

The MP for Norwich South sits on the Board as of right. The Chair is independently appointed. A Vice-Chair is elected from within the Board membership.

This is not a traditional board. It is a crew - diverse, rooted, and accountable to the people it serves. Members bring lived experience, local knowledge and genuine commitment. Those things are worth more here than a CV.

5. How We Work Together

- We show up - for the community, for the programme and for each other.
- That means coming to this work with curiosity rather than certainty, and with openness to being changed by what we hear. It means being strategic without losing sight of the human. It means being kind - not as a nicety, but as a discipline.
- We build on each other's ideas. A good idea belongs to the room, not to the person who said it first. We listen for what is useful in a contribution before we look for what is wrong with it.
- We champion each other in public and challenge each other in private. We do not shame or blame. When things go wrong - and they will - we look for solutions before we look for fault.
- We seek consensus - but consensus does not mean everyone loves the decision. It means everyone can live with it and commit to it. Once a decision is made, we stand behind it together.

5. How We Work Together

- We are led by evidence and by lived experience, and we know that both matter. Data tells us what is happening. People tell us what it feels like. We need both to make good decisions.
- We do not have to agree on everything. We do not even have to like each other. But we commit to treating every person in this room with respect, and to assuming good intent until we have clear reason to think otherwise.
- We are allies. If a colleague is being attacked, undermined or at risk of harm - in the room or outside it - we speak up. Silence is not neutrality.
- We hold each other's confidence. What is shared in the room stays in the room unless we agree otherwise. That trust is the foundation everything else is built on.
- When a fellow Board member is struggling - with the work, with the commitment, with something outside it - we notice, and we ask. We have each other's backs.

6. How we speak and listen

- We cannot know what people carry into the room. We commit to making this space as comfortable, safe and inclusive as we possibly can - and to asking each other what we need to make that possible.
- Everyone will have a chance to speak, without pressure or being put on the spot
- We listen actively - not waiting for our turn to speak, but genuinely hearing what is being said
- We are mindful of how much space we take up in a conversation - we speak to add, not to dominate
- We wait for others to finish before speaking
- We ask for clarification rather than assume or project
- We speak for ourselves and only ourselves - using "I" rather than speaking on behalf of others or their experiences
- We give credit where it is due - if we are building on someone else's idea, we say so
- We acknowledge that we all carry bias, and stay aware of its impact on others
- Words and tone matter - we are mindful of the impact of what we say, not just what we mean
- We recognise disagreement as a sign that multiple ideas and voices are entering the conversation - that is a good thing
- We are all learning. If something we said caused harm, we apologise for the impact - not just the intention
- This document itself is open to revision - if something isn't working for us, we say so

7. How we hold money and power

This programme exists because power and money have for too long flowed away from communities like ours - to distant decision-makers, extractive businesses, and short-term thinking. The Board exists to reverse that.

We hold up to £20 million on behalf of the people of West Earlham and Bowthorpe. That is not an abstraction. It is the most concrete expression of what this programme means - and how we steward it will determine whether people trust us, and whether that trust is deserved.

Power

- We make decisions with the community, not for it. Power sits with residents - not with institutions, not with the loudest voices in the room and not with those who have historically held it. We are accountable to the people this programme serves and we carry that accountability into every decision we make.

7. How we hold money and power

Money

We want money to flow into this neighbourhood and stay here.

That means:

- Buying local wherever possible - keeping spend circulating in this economy
- Buying social - prioritising suppliers who reinvest in people, planet and community
- Buying sustainable - considering environmental impact as a baseline, not an afterthought
- Taking a long-term and preventative view - asking not just what solves the problem now, but what builds resilience for the future
- Applying good and inclusive economy principles — who benefits, who is excluded and how do we close that gap
- Leveraging additional funds that see an exponential impact from our investments

Every significant spending decision should be able to answer: who does this serve, who does this employ, what social injustice does it tackle, where does this money go next and is this good for the planet?

7. Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interest are not a shameful thing - they are inevitable in a community-rooted board where members are embedded in local life.

What matters is how we handle them.

Undisclosed conflicts of interest are the single greatest **risk** to the integrity of this programme.

They undermine **trust, compromise decisions** and can **unravel everything** we are trying to build.

The rule is simple: if you have an interest - financial, personal or organisational - in a decision before the Board, you declare it, you step back from the discussion, and you do not vote. No exceptions.

The full process is set out in the **Terms of Reference** and **Conflicts of Interest Policy**.

Neither will improperly use knowledge gained solely through your role as a board member for the advancement of yourself, friends, family members, employer or business interests.

This is not about suspicion. It is about **protecting each other, protecting the programme** and **protecting the community's faith** in what we are doing.

8. Lines we don't cross

Some things are not up for debate.

This Board is anti-racist and anti-transphobic. We are committed to equality, dignity and inclusion - not as policies to comply with, but as values we hold and act on. We do not tolerate hate in any form - including hate speech, discrimination, or abuse - directed at any person on the basis of their race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or any other characteristic. We are not neutral. Neutrality in the face of harm is not balance - it is a choice, and it is the wrong one. When harm is being caused - in this room, in this neighbourhood, online or elsewhere - we speak up. Silence is not an option.

We are allies - to each other and to the community we serve. That means:

- Calling out racism, transphobia, discrimination and hate when we see it, even when it is uncomfortable
- Not waiting to be asked before speaking up for someone who is being harmed
- Understanding that intent does not cancel impact - if something we said or did caused harm, we take responsibility for it
- Never using our position on this Board to intimidate, marginalise or silence others

8. Lines we don't cross

In public and online

How we conduct ourselves outside the room matters as much as how we behave in it. We do not make public statements, post on social media, or speak to the press in ways that misrepresent the Board, undermine colleagues, or breach confidentiality. We are ambassadors for this programme whether we are in a meeting or not.

Confidentiality

Not everything stays in the room - nor should it. Decisions, minutes and investment summaries are published publicly, because transparency is fundamental to what we are. What we protect is the personal - disclosures made in confidence, sensitive deliberations and anything shared by a colleague that was not intended for public record. We ask if we're not sure.

We do not brief against each other. Ever.

There will be times when it is required by law that discussions, documents and other information must be treated in a confidential manner. Examples include personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations.

9. When things go wrong

Things will go wrong. That is not a failure of this programme - it is evidence that we are trying things worth trying.

What matters is how we respond.

Mistakes

We do not shame or blame. When something goes wrong - a decision that didn't land, a project that didn't deliver, a word that caused harm - we ask what happened, what we can learn and what we do differently. We are accountable without being punitive. We repair without requiring perfection.

Raising Concerns

If something doesn't feel right - a decision, a dynamic, a behaviour - we say so. There is no wrong way to raise a concern in good faith. The Chair is the first point of contact, but if the concern involves the Chair, it can be raised with the Vice Chair, The MP or the Accountable Body. No one should ever feel they have nowhere to turn.

Concerns raised in good faith will be taken seriously, handled with care and never used against the person who raised them.

9. When things go wrong

When Someone Causes Harm

We distinguish between mistakes made in ignorance and behaviour that is repeated, deliberate or seriously harmful. The first calls for learning and repair. The second calls for action.

Where a Board member's behaviour breaches the principles in this document - persistently, seriously, or in ways that harm others or undermine the programme - the Board will act. The process for doing so is set out in the Terms of Reference. It will always include the right to respond.

When Someone is Struggling

If a Board member is finding it hard to contribute - because of pressure, circumstance, or something beyond the work - we notice and we ask. We look for ways to support before we reach for solutions that involve stepping back. If stepping back is ultimately the right answer, we reach that conclusion together, with care.

We chose to do this work together. We owe each other the same commitment to seeing it through.

Annex 1 The Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles) and Code of Conduct for Members

Selflessness: Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity: Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity: In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability: Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness: Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it

Honesty: Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership: Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Annex 3 - The Nolan Principles of Public Life