



**RTPI**  
Royal Town  
Planning Institute

# Code of Professional Conduct

## Introduction and purpose

The Royal Town Planning Institute, as constituted by Royal Charter, (the 'Chartered Institute') exists to advance the science and art of planning for the benefit of the public. To achieve this, the Chartered Institute requires planning professionals to meet and maintain high standards of competence and to conduct themselves in a way that inspires trust and confidence in the profession.

As set out in its Byelaws, "the Board of Trustees may issue a code or codes of professional conduct and practice setting out the standards, ethics and professional behaviour expected of Members". In addition, "every Member shall...conduct themselves in such a manner as shall not prejudice their professional status or the reputation of the Chartered Institute and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing every Member shall, in particular, comply at all times with any Code of Professional Conduct applicable to their category of membership prescribed and published by the Board of Trustees".

Under this published code, the Chartered Institute requires its Members to adhere to five core principles, namely:

- 1 **Honesty and integrity**
- 2 **Professional competence**
- 3 **Independent professional judgement**
- 4 **Professional practice and duties**
- 5 **Professional behaviour and respect**


The following numbered clauses indicate the required standards, ethics and professional behaviour integral to these five principles. These requirements apply regardless of any permission or agreement to the contrary by or with the client or body employing or consulting any Member.

This Code can also apply to personal circumstances and situations as well as professional ones.

From time to time, the Chartered Institute will amend and update the code and any supplementary regulations. Members are responsible for keeping themselves up to date and must observe such amendments and updates as they come into effect. Additional guidance and support to Members, offering case studies and advice on the behaviours and practices required, may be published by the Chartered Institute.

As set out in the RTPI Byelaws, “Procedures for the conduct of disciplinary proceedings in respect of any complaint made against a Member...shall be prescribed by Regulations” and “the Board of Trustees may establish a disciplinary committee and such other committees as it sees fit for the conduct of such procedures”. The Chartered Institute will assess and investigate breaches of this Code in accordance with its adopted Complaints Procedures.

Where the Code requires written correspondence, emails are an acceptable form of written correspondence.





## Honesty and integrity

- 1 Members are required to uphold the highest standards of professional ethics and must act with honesty and integrity throughout their career.
- 2 Members must take all reasonable steps to ensure that their private, personal, political and financial interests do not conflict with their professional duties.
- 3 Members must disclose to their employer or clients, as appropriate, any potential conflicts of interest and must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that no conflict of duty arises between the interests of one employer, client or business associate and the interests of another.
- 4 Members must not disclose or use to the advantage of themselves, their employers or clients, information acquired in confidence in the course of their work, unless disclosure is required by law, or is with the written and informed consent of the party benefitting from the confidence.
- 5 Members must not offer or accept bribes or inducements, financial or otherwise, to influence a decision or professional point of view with regards to planning matters.
- 6 Members must disclose to their employers or clients any offers of inducements, discounts, gifts or commissions received from any third parties in connection with their work.



## Professional competence

- 7 Members shall act competently, conscientiously and responsibly and to this end are expected to apply reasonable standards of skill, knowledge and care in the performance of all their work, with the understanding that Members have a duty to their employers, clients, colleagues and others.
- 8 Members must take all reasonable steps to update their skills, knowledge and expertise to maintain their professional competence throughout their career for the benefit of the public, their clients, the natural environment and the quality of the built environment. Members must therefore comply with any supplementary regulations on the requirements for continuous professional development (CPD).
- 9 Members who, as employers or managers, have responsibility for other Members or professionals must take all reasonable steps to encourage and support them in the maintenance of professional competence and the undertaking of CPD.
- 10 Members must act within the scope of their professional competence in undertaking the professional planning services they are employed or commissioned to do. Members must therefore undertake to perform those services only when they, together with those whom they may engage as employees or consultants, are sufficiently qualified by education, training or experience in the specific areas involved.



## Independent professional judgement

- 11 Members must exercise fearlessly and impartially their independent professional judgement to the best of their skill and understanding.
- 12 Members must not make or subscribe to any statements or reports which are contrary to their own genuine professional opinions, nor knowingly enter into any contract or agreement which requires them to do so.
- 13 Members must base their professional advice on relevant, reliable and supportable evidence and present the results of data and analysis clearly and without improper manipulation.
- 14 Members must disclose their professional designation where appropriate to their employers, clients, colleagues or others and, unless there is good reason not to, must use their post-nominal letters, where held and where possible, in any professional correspondence as a mark of professional standing.



## Professional practice and duties

- 15 Before commencing work on any planning services, Members must:

  - a. ensure that their terms of engagement, which includes a written fee agreement and clear indication as to the likely fees and expenses and a description of the services proposed, have been given and confirmed in writing to their clients; and
  - b. satisfy themselves that these terms have been understood and accepted.
- 16 Members must honour the terms of engagement provided unless there is written agreement to a variation.
- 17 Members must notify their clients in writing before undertaking planning work or incurring fees or expenses additional to those previously agreed and satisfy themselves that the necessary instructions have been received.
- 18 When accepting instructions Members must ensure that the services offered are appropriate and proportionate to the client's requirements.
- 19 Members engaging in planning practice must, where applicable, be insured against claims for breach of professional duty. Members must therefore comply with any supplementary regulations on compulsory professional indemnity insurance.



## Professional practice and duties (continued)

- 20 Members who are responsible for holding client money must take reasonable steps to account separately for those funds in order to protect them and must return any money held as soon as practicable following a written request to do so.
- 21 Members who, as employers or managers, have responsibility for the work of an organisation or body engaged in planning work must take all reasonable steps to ensure that planning matters in the organisation or body are conducted in accordance with this Code.
- 22 Members must not make derogatory comparisons with the services available from others engaged in planning work and must not misrepresent the services available from their own practices. All advertising must be legal, decent, honest and truthful and must avoid exaggeration.
- 23 When canvassing instructions from a client, members must:
- a. indicate that the existing professional adviser (if any) should be consulted.
  - b. not canvass repeatedly or persistently nor continue canvassing instructions from individuals or clients who have clearly stated that they do not require the services offered.
- 24 Members must comply with any supplementary regulations on the use of RTPI logos.



## Professional behaviour and respect

- 25 Members must at all times act in a way which promotes and encourages equity and inclusion and the principles of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and must not discriminate on the basis of any other status.
- 26 Members must not engage in or display any bullying, harassing and victimising behaviours or actions and should challenge either directly or by reporting any inappropriate behaviours that they witness.
- 27 Members must take all reasonable steps to ensure that supply and procurement chains are equitable and do not involve Modern Slavery or any other abuse of labour practice.
- 28 Members must at all times conduct themselves in a manner that does not prejudice their professional status or the reputation of the Chartered Institute.



## General provisions

- 29** The Board of Trustees, acting under Byelaw 19, has power to discipline any Member who:
- a.** in the opinion of a disciplinary committee contravenes any of the provisions of the Code of Professional Conduct, including the supplementary regulations referred to in Annex A to the Code, or of the Royal Charter and Byelaws; or who
  - b.** is convicted by a court of a criminal offence which in the opinion of the Panel results in a breach of the provisions of Byelaw 18; or who
  - c.** in the opinion of the disciplinary committee is guilty of gross professional misconduct or incompetence or of such conduct as to render them unfit to continue to be a member of the Chartered Institute.
- 30** The Code applies to every Member, irrespective of their class of membership or territory within which they practise.
- 31** Every Member must provide up-to-date details of their employment, including where they are a sole principal, partner, director or consultant to a firm. This must be provided within 28 days of a change in circumstances or a request from an RTPI Officer.



## General provisions

- 32 Every Member must, subject to any restrictions imposed by law or the courts, report to the Chartered Institute any alleged breach of this Code of which they become aware and to assist the Chartered Institute in its investigations.
- 33 Every Member who is the subject of investigation by the Chartered Institute must assist the Chartered Institute in its investigations.
- 34 Disciplinary action will be taken only when the Chartered Institute believes that the Member is personally responsible for the conduct or action in question.
- 35 The Board of Trustees may from time to time publish supplementary regulations and Members must comply with any such regulations.

## Annex: disciplinary action

- A1** The Chartered Institute will not use its disciplinary procedures to review the decisions of planning authorities nor to investigate allegations of poor administration on the part of planning authorities or other organisations.
- A2** The Chartered Institute will not normally investigate allegations which fall within the competence of a criminal court, civil court, employment tribunal, public services Ombudsman or other duly appointed tribunal. In such cases, however, the Conduct and Discipline Panel reserves the right to consider whether any findings of fact or judgement by the relevant tribunal or court constitute a breach of the Code and if they do and if the Panel so determines to take appropriate disciplinary action.
- A3** Where there is a remedy that could reasonably be available to the complainant in civil proceedings the Chartered Institute will initiate its own investigation only after the conclusion of any such proceedings.

[www.rtpi.org.uk/professionalstandards](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/professionalstandards)  
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