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# **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR INVOLVEMENT IN PARTY POLITICS**

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**DATE: November 2020**



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

**BRILL FRC** recognises that increasing numbers of people involved in community sector organisations are also becoming involved in the political process. It is felt that giving a voice to the principles of community development within local political parties and local authorities is of benefit to those who are excluded from society.

It could be argued that there is a continuum of change, where local party politics becomes the next developmental step in creating social change at a structural level and that involvement in local political structures can be used to promote community development policies, practices and principles.

It can also be argued that any central government-funded project will always be limited in how much it can challenge government policy or actions, whereas an elected local authority is not as restricted.

It must be acknowledged that only limited change can be brought about through either the local authority or through community organisational structures on their own, and that the two working in tandem will create far greater and longer-lasting change.

## **1.1 Issues arising for those involved in a community sector organisation and a political party**

There could be issues that arise for those who fulfill a dual role in being involved in a community sector organisation and a political party. There are inevitable potential conflicts of interest or perceived conflicts of interest. This is particularly the case when the individuals involved are paid employees of a community organisation or are involved in the Board of Management as a Director. For example, confusion can occur in the minds of those dealing with staff or Directors from a project in terms of whether this person is representing the community organisation or a local party political interest.

**A potential conflict of interest can arise if a volunteer, staff member or management member of an organisation uses, or is perceived to use, the **BRILL FRC** to promote party policies or an individual's political career.**

This Code of Conduct is to be used by individuals who operate the dual roles of being involved as local community development activists operating at any level in a community sector organisation and are also party-political activists.

## 2. CODE OF CONDUCT

In accepting that there is a valid argument and a democratic right for individuals to involve themselves simultaneously in a community sector organisation and local and/or national party politics, and **BRILL FRC** feels that a Code of Conduct will ensure that the Management Committee and staff operate a process that is transparent and accountable.

### 2.1 General principles

- The premises of **BRILL FRC** will not be used for party-political meetings or gatherings of any kind;
- The **BRILL FRC's** facilities or resources will not be used for party reasons, e.g. typing, copying, telephone, e-mails, etc.;
- Material promoting *specific* party policies or campaigns will not be displayed in or in the vicinity of the **BRILL FRC** ;
- Emblems that promote *specific* party policies or campaigns will not be worn by staff in or in the vicinity of the **BRILL FRC** ;

The following actions are to be taken if a staff member or management member enters into the political arena:

- In the case where a staff member/management member agrees to become a political candidate, he/she will in the first instance discuss this with the Chairperson;
- The staff member/management member will not act as public spokesperson on behalf of the party to which he/she belongs;
- When attending meetings in a representative role of the **BRILL FRC** or in dealing with individuals where confusion is likely to arise, the staff member/management member clearly states in which role he/she is operating;

- Where a staff member engages in canvassing for election for him/herself or for other candidates, he/she should take leave of absence or holidays in agreement with the Management Committee, and on whatever conditions are agreed with them (e.g. special unpaid leave, holidays, time-in-lieu, availability to deal with emergencies, etc.);
- Where a management member engages in canvassing for election for him/herself or for other candidates, he/she should step aside from involvement in the activities of the **BRILL FRC** during the period of canvassing, as agreed with the Management Committee;
- Where a management member is a candidate in an election, he/she should step aside from involvement in the activities of the **BRILL FRC** from the date of declaration of candidature until after the election has taken place;
- Where a staff member/management member is a candidate in an election, that individual must ensure that neither his/her promotional material nor anybody canvassing on his/her behalf in any way suggests that that individual is a candidate representing **BRILL FRC**, or that his/her candidature has been endorsed by **BRILL FRC**.

## **2.2 Methods for dealing with potential conflict of interests**

It is accepted that, no matter what efforts are made, difficulties around conflict of interest may still arise from time to time. The organisation's Management Committee has adopted the following procedures for dealing with such situations. These procedures, while similar to the grievance procedures of some projects, should be seen as separate, operated and clearly indicated as such:

### **In the event of a staff member engaging in party-political activity:**

- STEP 1:** In the case where a staff member feels a conflict of interest may arise because of their own involvement with party politics, he/she will in the first instance discuss this with their direct Line Manager. In the instance of this being the Manager, they will bring the issue to the Staff Liaison Group.
- STEP 2:** If there is no agreement on what a staff member should do, the matter will be raised with the Chairperson of the Board.

**STEP 3:** If the issue is not resolved the Chairperson will then raise the issue at the full Management Committee of **BRILL FRC** and **their decision will be final.**

**In the event of a management member engaging in party-political activity:**

**STEP 1:** In the case where a management member feels a conflict of interest may arise because of their own involvement with party politics, he/she will in the first instance discuss this with the Chairperson.

**STEP 2:** If there is no agreement on what a management member should do, the matter will be raised by the Chairperson with the officers of the Board.

**STEP 3:** If the issue is not resolved at a meeting of the officers, the Chairperson will then raise the issue at the full Management Committee and **their decision will be final.**

**In the event of a staff member/management member having a concern:**

Where a member of the **BRILL FRC**, whether staff or Management Committee, feels that another staff member/management member is engaging in activity that is causing a conflict of interest, he/she will raise the matter in the first instance with the direct Line Manager/Chairperson and the above procedures will then operate.

If the Chairperson feels that no action is required, the staff member/management member will be informed by the Chairperson of what has happened. The Chairperson's decision will be noted in the next Board meeting minutes.

**In the event of a third-party concern**

In the case where a third party raises a concern about a conflict of interest, it must in all instances be directed to the Chairperson. If appropriate, the Chairperson will instigate the above procedures.

This Policy was discussed and agreed at a Board meeting on \_\_\_\_\_.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

**Review History:**