**Ide Parish Council**

Report on the Council contracting for paid work with councillors

1. Background.

A small repair was necessary to equipment in the Play Area in March 2022, costing about £100. The clerk in liaison with one of the councillors responsible for the Play Area’s safe running and maintenance asked another councillor to undertake the repair, which they did.

Because this created a personal financial interest, the clerk and chair took the item to the next PC meeting before making a payment. At the meeting, when the councillor who had performed the work had removed themself from the room, the Council’s view was sought and permission requested to pay the councillor for the work.

2. I was asked to review current guidance and policy to inform our practice in future.

3. The Council’s adopted Code of Conduct, 2020 provided by NALC and to be found on our website; and The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance’s *Practitioners’ Guide* March 2022are relevant reference documents.

4. The guiding principle and duty for Councillors, Councils and Clerks is to spot and avoid conflicts of interest, especially if they are pecuniary (financial). If a situation arises or is created where a personal financial interest would need to be declared, that is a conflict of interest and should be avoided.

5. Discussion of this identical topic on a community online forum called Councillor Q&A advised that if practical issues meant that the conflict of interests was unavoidable, discussion and voting should occur at a Council meeting [as took place in our Council]. But the advice to avoid such situations remains, since it was difficult to see a way to offer a thoroughly convincing explanation to the electorate that would give solid assurance that a contract had been awarded without bias.

6. In summary, despite the convenience, speed and efficient use of resources that make it an appealing option, contracting for paid work with councillors should be avoided because of the inevitable conflict of interests it creates.

NCAB, 5 7 22.