



**BVNA**  
British Veterinary  
Nursing Association

## **BRITISH VETERINARY NURSING ASSOCIATION**

### **Code of Conduct for Council Members, Officers and Advisors\***

Council Members and Officers together are responsible for the governance of the BVNA and its decisions. The key functions of the Council are: setting policy and strategic direction, performance monitoring, financial stewardship, accountability, communication and engaging with stakeholders.

*\* All references to Council Member shall also apply to candidates for the role of Council Member who are required to agree to be bound by the terms of this Code of Conduct upon submitting their nomination papers.*

### **Aims**

The BVNA's main aim is to ensure the welfare of animals through the promotion of excellent veterinary nursing. As a membership body, whose members are accountable to the Regulatory Body and whose duties are enshrined in law, it follows that the roles of Council Member, Officer and Advisor to the BVNA are all underpinned by standards of good conduct and behaviour.

This Code provides guidance for Council Members, Officers and Advisors to assist them in undertaking their duties in accordance with accepted standards of public service.

This Code is in addition to professional codes of conduct.

### **Roles**

For the purposes of this Code, the roles of the Council Members are set out as follows:

- Council Member: all Council Members are elected by the members of the Association as their representatives. They form a Council and Committees to direct and serve the BVNA and Members' interests
- President: the President is appointed by Council Members and acts as the Chair of BVNA Council and first representative of the BVNA
- Officers: a collective title for the positions of Honorary Secretary, Honorary

Treasurer, Junior Vice President, Senior Vice President and President.

The principles of this Code will extend to approved Candidates seeking election to BVNA Council who will be asked to sign a statement to that effect as part of their nominations approval.

### **Principles of Governance**

The Council endorses the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by the Nolan Committee (1996):

#### *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.

### *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.

## **Ways of Working**

Furthermore, in our working we will aim to be:

- Focused: on members' and the BVNA's best interests, the promotion of the profession, targeting the issues that are most relevant
- Accountable: seeking the views of members and professional colleagues, open to challenge and to offering justification for our actions and decisions
- Transparent: making public our decisions, activities, meetings and proceedings wherever reasonable and practicable
- Consistent: working with other partner organisations, building sustainable relationships and shared approaches as appropriate
- Excellent: providing good value to partners and value for money to Members, ensuring the BVNA is a great place to work, particularly through developing and training staff, Council Members and Regional Reps.

## **Council Member Responsibilities**

All Council Members should follow the Seven Principles of Public Life and comply with this Code of Conduct. Particular attention should be given to the following:

### *Attendance*

Council Members are expected to attend Council, Council committees and occasional external meetings; to prepare and contribute effectively and to conduct themselves at all times in accordance with the public interest. A record of attendance will be kept at

BVNA Council/Committee meetings and be made available to members.

In addition, Officers are expected to attend the meetings of external partners, engage with their business and communicate actively with Council over the business of those meetings.

#### *Confidentiality*

Council Members are expected to respect the confidentiality of the Association and its members. This may include privileged information, “Reserved” matters and commercially or personally sensitive information. Council Members may only share documents that are on the public parts of meeting agendas. If in doubt, check with the President or Strategic Director.

#### *Expression of Views*

The BVNA works in a sensitive, political environment where words and conduct have impact. Council Members are expected to distinguish clearly, when speaking or writing, between personal views and those of the BVNA. It should be presumed that any statement made by an Officer will be considered to be a reflection of the views of the BVNA.

For these reasons, any communication with the media either of a general nature (which may not be specifically related to Council work or BVNA policy) or more particularly which is about the Council’s work, partners or policy (including publication of views via the internet) should be discussed with the Strategic Director, President or an Officer before any statement is made.

The frequency and speed of communication through social media presents a specific set of challenges. An addendum to the Code of Conduct with guidance for online communications is attached.

#### *Corporate Responsibility*

Council Members contribute to Council decisions and take joint responsibility for them. This does not preclude a member who disagrees with a decision of a Council committee on which they serve from presenting their views to the Council. Once a Council decision has been taken each member should support it as the view of the BVNA.

### *Financial or Professional Interests*

Council Members must declare any professional, personal or business interests that may conflict, or appear to conflict, with their responsibilities as members, advisers or visitors. A Register of Interests is kept by the BVNA and they must advise the Committee Clerk and enter those details. It is the responsibility of Council Members to keep them updated within one calendar month of any changes.

### *Conflicts of Interest*

Council Members are free to engage in political activities or to maintain associations with professional organisations provided that such activity does not conflict with the role of the BVNA or compromise their position as a BVNA Council Member. This is particularly true of Officer roles.

Such outside activities must always be openly declared when a related matter is under discussion.

If a member, or a body corporate for which a Council Member is a responsible officer, is the subject matter of an investigation or proceedings undertaken by the relevant professional body (i.e. RCVS or similar) regarding their fitness to practise the Council Member should declare this in confidence to the President and/or Strategic Director. The member must make such a declaration immediately they are aware that a complaint or information to initiate an investigation or proceedings has been received. A decision will then be made by Officers or Council as appropriate whether that Council Member should withdraw from all activities related to Council business until the conclusion of the investigation or proceedings. This is an essential step to protect the reputation of the BVNA.

### *Equality and Diversity*

Council Members must at all times demonstrate respect and dignity for others; a commitment to diversity and equal opportunities; and conduct themselves in a non-discriminatory manner.

### *Gifts and Hospitality*

Council Members must not accept gifts, hospitality or benefits offered as a consequence of BVNA business, other than reasonable refreshments and expenses. If gifts cannot be refused without causing offence, they should be reported to the Strategic Director

within 15 working days, who will discuss with the member what action should be taken.

### *Personal Behaviour*

Council Members' behaviour must demonstrate the standards expected of holders of public office. Where a Council Member has been charged with, or has been convicted of, a criminal offence, or has been the subject of a disciplinary procedure by any licensing body the member must inform the Strategic Director at the earliest opportunity. The presumption will be that the Council Member will withdraw from all activities related to Council business until the conclusion of the investigation or proceedings.

### **Breach**

A breach of the Code of Conduct can be a serious matter with its potential to impact on the reputation of the BVNA and its relationship with members and partners.

A breach will be treated in accordance with a disciplinary process.

## **ADDENDUM: Social Media Communications**

### 1. Context

- 1.1 The BVNA promotes healthy and honest conversation between its Council Members, its members, partners and professional colleagues.
- 1.2 The BVNA values, respects, and upholds the intellectual property rights of its Council Members.

### 2. Communications and Content

- 2.1 This addendum applies to all online communications including but not limited to social media (facebook, twitter, instagram, snapchat etc.), blogs, web posts, webcasts (including videos, vlogs, Skype and Zoom calls etc.), text messages (including WhatsApp, direct messaging etc.), images, audio files and email etc. (collectively referred to here as “content”).
- 2.2 Content pertaining to sensitive information (particularly found within internal BVNA communications and discussions between Council Members) should not be shared to the outside online community. Divulging confidential information such as information about members, practices, plans, spending, commercial and internal operations and legal matters is prohibited.
- 2.3 The BVNA reserves the right to ask for any misleading or inaccurate online content to be amended, edited or deleted where they violate the Code of Conduct.

### 3. Guidelines for Council Members

- 3.1 Care should be taken with all online communication.
- 3.2 Council Members should be mindful of the principles of public office and seek integrity, professionalism, privacy and authenticity in their content.
- 3.3 Council Members may associate themselves with the BVNA when posting, where appropriate, but they must clearly brand their online posts as personal and purely their own.
- 3.4 Council Members should take care not to suggest or infer the BVNA’s endorsement of any commercial interests or associations except where such a
- 3.5 relationship exists and only then in the context of that agreement (e.g. a specific event)

- 3.6 Council Members should not make representations on behalf of the BVNA unless they are certain of the BVNA's position or it has been explicitly agreed for them to do so.
- 3.7 Officers should be particularly aware of how their views may be represented and should consider that any statement about veterinary nursing matters, or opinions offered may be considered as the opinion or position of the BVNA. This is particularly true of the President.