

Part 5(c) – Employee Code of Conduct

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Part 5(c) – Employee Code of Conduct

1. Introduction

The aim of this Code

This Code defines the responsibilities and standards required of all who work for and on behalf of the Council, including interims, agency workers and Council employees who are seconded to other organisations.

2. Principles

This Code is consistent with the Nolan Principles (as revised by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in January 2013) and S.28(1) of the Localism Act 2011:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

3. Breach of this Code

Breaches of this Code will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action. Serious breaches of the Code may be considered gross misconduct and result in dismissal.

4. Supporting Policies

This Code is supported by a range of Policies some of which are specifically referred to in this document and are incorporated by reference.

5. When working on behalf of the Council you must:

- Act in the interests of the Council and in accordance with the principles set out in Section 1.
- Comply with the law, this Code, the Council's Constitution, Policies & Procedures and other professional standards which apply to your role.
- Report any concerns or breaches of this Code to your manager.
- Ask your manager if you are unsure what is required of you.

6. Standards Required

6.1 Political Neutrality

- You must remain politically neutral and objective in your work role.
- You must not allow your own personal or political opinions to interfere with your work.

6.2 Working with Elected Members

Mutual trust and respect between elected Members and employees is essential if the partnership necessary for the effective running of a local authority is to succeed.

You must:

- work for all Members to provide the best possible service to the residents and other stakeholders of the Council
- give appropriate and impartial advice to Members
- ensure working relationships are kept on a professional basis
- at all times observe the Protocol on Member / Officer Relations in Part 5(d) of the Constitution.
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6.3 Close Personal Relationships

Close personal relationships between Council employees can cause significant problems. Employees must comply with the Council's "Close Personal Relationships Policy".

6.4 Personal Conduct

You must:

- carry out the full requirements of your role, aligned to your contract of employment and the Council's policies;
- behave politely and reasonably;
- maintain acceptable standards of appearance and personal hygiene;
- demonstrate your commitment to valuing diversity and equality;
- attend work in accordance with the terms of your contract of employment and comply with sickness and other absence policies;
- wear your security pass whilst representing the Council;
- keep relationships with Members, employees, contractors or partners, potential contractors or service users, on a professional basis;
- avoid damage to the Council's reputation or services.

You must not:

- engage in any conduct that is harmful to the Council or its interests, or which brings the Council into disrepute or exposes it to legal action;
- be under the influence of alcohol or un-prescribed drugs so as to adversely affect your role;
- misuse your official position or information obtained in the course of your work, for personal interest or the interest of others.

7. Politically Restricted Posts

The law provides that certain Council posts are politically restricted.

Details of such posts and the rules that relate to them are set out in the Council's "Politically Restricted Posts Policy".

8. Declarations of Interest

Specific obligations apply to all Council employees to declare certain interests.

These obligations are set out in the Council's "Declarations of Interest Policy".

9. Gifts and Hospitality

There are very strict rules relating to the receipt of gifts and hospitality which apply to all employees.

The rules are set out in the Council's "Gifts & Hospitality Policy".

10. Handling the Council's Money or Sponsorship

The Council is a publically funded organisation and as such you must:

- be familiar with and comply with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules in Part 4(f) of the Constitution (seeking advice where necessary).
- use the Council's funds in a responsible, accountable, and lawful way;
- seek value for money;
- comply with any Departmental policy or procedure issued in respect of service user's finances.
- make sure that any sponsorship accepted is related to the Council's business;
- if you suspect financial irregularity, corruption or fraud, contact the Head of Internal Audit;
- make sure you do not benefit from any contract or sponsorship the Council may receive, or show any favour to a partner, spouse, relative, friend or associate.

11. Procuring, Managing or using the Council's Contracts

Where your role involves procuring, managing or using the Council's contracts:

You must:

- comply with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules and Contracts Procedure Rules in Part 4(f) and Part 4(g) of the Constitution respectively.

You must not:

- discriminate against any part of the local community in the tendering and contracting process.

12. Reporting Improper or Illegal Activities

If you are concerned about any activities which you think may conflict with this Code, you should raise the matter with your line manager or Head of Service.

You must also report any activity which you believe is illegal, improper, unethical, dangerous or a breach of policy to your manager, or to a higher manager if your manager is involved in the activity.

The Council's Whistle-blowing "Confidential Reporting Policy" gives protection to employees, consultants or contractors who raise concerns of this nature that are in the public interest.

13. Responsibilities when Managing Others

As a manager, your leadership skills are key elements to your role.

You must:

- carry out the full requirements of your management role, aligned to your contract of employment and the Council's policies;
- maintain an environment of respect, recognition and support and to induct all new employees to their role;
- make appointments only on the basis of merit and capability to carry out the role;
- make sure decisions relating to discipline, promotion and pay are objectively justified;
- identify and assess all risks and ensure they are managed appropriately;
- ensure business continuity arrangements are in place to enable continued delivery of services;
- exercise a duty of care to employees, partners, service users and others, ensuring health and safety requirements are met.

You must not:

- be involved in a selection process or interview if you are related to an applicant or in a close personal relationship with them or a member of their immediate family.

14. Other and Outside Work

If you propose to undertake any paid or unpaid work in addition to your substantive role at the Council you must comply with the requirements of the Council's "Other and Outside Work Policy".

15. Diversity and Equality

Demonstrating your commitment to equality and diversity is an integral part of your role at the Council as outlined in the Council's "Equality Opportunities Policy" and the Equality Analysis Guidance.

In particular you must:

- treat others with respect and value diversity;
- seek to review all policies, procedures and services under your responsibility to assess whether any group is being unfairly discriminated against (known as Equality Assessments);
- take steps to eliminate discrimination and remove barriers to fair treatment.

You must not:

- discriminate unfairly in employment practices, the provision of facilities or services.

16. Protecting Confidential Information

Maintaining confidentiality of sensitive information is essential.

You must:

- comply with the Council's "Data Protection Policy", "ICT Corporate Information Security Policy", "ICT Acceptable User Policy and supporting standards;
- report any suspected breach of information security;
- label and store information documents to allow access to authorised users and restrict unauthorised users;
- refer any media or press enquiries to the Policy, Engagement & Communications team immediately, and follow their instructions.

You must not:

- disclose your password to anyone;
- use information or facilities provided, for unauthorised personal use, improper or commercial gain, or for fraudulent or malicious activities;
- compromise the security of the Council's information, for example by installing unauthorised software, inappropriately securing information or interfering with standard security settings.

17. Using the Council's Equipment, Materials and Property

The facilities and equipment provided as part of your work belong to the Council

You must:

- comply with health and safety regulations and use personal protective equipment as required;
- take care of the Council's property or equipment, keeping it secure and reporting any breakages or breaches in security;
- use equipment and facilities for authorised purposes only.

You must not:

- use the Council's equipment or property for personal gain or fraudulent activity;
- use the Council's vehicles for unauthorised purposes.

18. Working with Service Users

When working with service users, you should be familiar with the Council's policies, local service standards and professional standards as they relate to your role.

You must:

- give the highest level of care to service users;
- keep all service users' money, personal records, information and correspondence secure in accordance with the Council's Policies, Caldicott principles and the Data Protection Act;
- make sure service users money and personal belongings are handled safely and in accordance with the Council's policies;
- report any concerns about the care of service users to your line manager.

You must not:

- give any service information to anyone except those authorised to receive it;
- form inappropriate close personal relationships with service users, their relatives or carers or friends.

19. Use of Social Media and Social Networking

Specific obligations apply to all Council employees who use social media.

These obligations are set out in the Council's "Social Media Policy".

20. Intellectual Property

The work you do on behalf of the Council is called intellectual property. All creative designs, writings, drawings and inventions produced by staff in the course of their normal duties remain the property of the Council.

21. Commitment to the Environment

In demonstrating your commitment to improving the environment you must:

- consider the environmental impact of your actions;
- reduce, re-use and recycle wherever possible;
- develop environmentally sensitive policies and practices with suppliers, partners and service users.