



Code of Conduct for Employees

The Seven Principles of Public Life

The Nolan Committee, which the Government set up to look at the standards in public life, has highlighted these seven principles which it considered applied to all aspects of public life and to anyone who serves the public in any way.

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support the principles by leadership and example.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

Purpose

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees who work for Local Government.

It is important that the Council ensures that all employees are made aware of the standards of conduct expected of them.

This Code, which sets out those standards of conduct expected of all employees, has been adopted by the Council, and will be reviewed from time-to-time. If employees are unsure of any actions they must take in respect of any matters raised in this document they should seek further guidance from their manager.

Standards

You are expected:

- To comply with the Authority's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations at all times;
- To give the highest possible standard of service to the public;
- (if it is part of your duties) to provide appropriate advice to Councillors and fellow employees with impartiality;
- Through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service, any impropriety or breach of procedure.

Disclosure of Information

Depending upon the nature of your work, you may have access to information which is of a confidential nature.

- You must be aware of which information is available to the public and which is not. If there is doubt about whether information can be released, the employee should consult his or her Line Manager or Chief Officer;
- You must not disclose to the public any information which is not available to them;
- You should not use any information obtained in the course of your employment for personal gain or benefit, nor pass it on to others who might use it in such a way;
- If you receive any particular information from a Councillor which is personal to that Councillor, and does not belong to the Council, you should not divulge it without the prior approval of that Councillor, except where such disclosure is required or sanctioned by the law.

Political Neutrality

It is very important that employees observe political neutrality at all times at work (whether or not it is part of your duties to advise political groups). You must also:

- Serve and respect the individual rights of all Councillors;
- Not allow your personal or political opinions to interfere with your work.

Relationships

To protect yourself against any allegations of bias, you should:

- Avoid close personal familiarity at work with Councillors;
- Ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community;
- Make known to the Chief Technical Officer and register in the Interest in Contracts and proposed Contracts Register any relationship of a business or private nature with external or potential contractors (as soon as you are aware of the fact);
- (if as part of your duties, you order equipment or services, or are involved in the awarding of contracts), do this on merit by fair competition against other tenders and in compliance with the Authority's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and you should not show special favour to businesses run by eg friends, partners or relatives;
- (if as part of your duties, you engage or supervise, or have any other official relationship, with contractors) declare to the Chief Technical Officer and register in the Interest in Contracts and proposed Contracts Register any private or domestic relationship you have had, or currently have with these contractors.

Appointment/employment matters

If you have a management or supervisory role at work you should:

- Ensure that you appoint staff based on merit;
- Not be involved in an appointment where you are related to an applicant or have a close personal relationship with them outside work;
- Not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a relative, partner etc.

Outside Commitments

All employees should be clear about their contractual obligations and should not take outside employment which impacts on, distract them from, or conflicts with their Council work.

Staff who are employed in posts at Grade 5 or above who wish to take outside employment, in addition to your work for the Council, should, before accepting any offer, discuss the matter with your line manager and then write a letter to your Chief Officer giving the details and requesting his/her agreement in writing. Your Chief Officer will discuss the matter with the Chief Executive (who has been delegated responsibility to approve or refuse such requests) and will then reply in writing giving the Chief Executive's decision.

Personal Interests

You must declare in the Register of Officer Interests, held in the Administration Department:

- Any financial or non financial interest that you consider could bring about conflict with the Council's interests;
- If you are a member of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules of membership or conduct.

Equality

The Council believes that all members of the community, customers and other employees should have equal access to its services.

You must therefore comply with:

- the Council's Equal Opportunities statement;
- the Council's Employment of Disabled Persons statement.

Within the workplace, there should be mutual respect and employees' language and behaviour should be conducive to a productive and harmonious work environment, with all employees having the right to be treated with fairness and equity.

Separation of Roles during Tendering

Employees involved in the tendering process and dealing with contractors should be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles within the Authority. In particular you must:

- Adhere to the Authority's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations;
- Exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors;
- Not disclose any confidential information that you are privy to on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors to any unauthorized party or organisation
- Demonstrate accountability and fairness if you are a senior employee who has both client and contractor responsibility;
- Inform the Chief Executive and withdraw from the contract awarding processes as soon as you have formed a definite intent if you are contemplating a management buy out
- Ensure that no special favour is shown to current or recent former employees or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior or relevant managerial capacity.

Corruption

Corruption is a serious criminal offence. You must not corruptly receive or give a gift, loan, fee, award or advantage for doing or not doing anything or showing favour to any person in their official capacity. If such an allegation is made, it is for you to demonstrate that any rewards received have not been corruptly obtained.

Use of financial resources

You must ensure that you use any public funds entrusted to you in a responsible and lawful manner.

You should strive to:

- Comply with the Authority's Financial Regulations at all times;
- Ensure value for money and best value for the local community;
- Avoid legal challenge to the Council.

Hospitality and Gifts

It is in order to accept:

- Token gifts of insignificant value e.g. diaries, pens etc. The value of which to be set initially at £3 (and will be reviewed periodically);
- Hospitality offers if there is genuine need to impart information or represent the Council in the community;
- Hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses, where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal, where the Council gives consent in advance and where the Council is satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised.

When accepting hospitality you should:

- Be particularly sensitive as to its timing in relation to decisions which the Council may be taking affecting those providing the hospitality;
- Gain authorisation in advance from your line manager and record the hospitality in the Register of Hospitality/Sponsorship which is held in the Administration Department.

It is not in order to accept:

- Significant personal gifts from contractors and suppliers;
- Invitations to purely social or sporting functions unless these are part of the life of the community or where the Council should be seen to be represented;
- The cost of visits to inspect equipment etc (where these are required) as this may jeopardize the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions. The Council should meet the costs of these visits.

When declining hospitality you should:

- Do so courteously but firmly, informing the person making the offer of the procedures and standards operating within the Council.

Sponsorship

Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a local government activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of personal gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.

Line Managers must:

- Report any proposed sponsorship for activities to the Management Team before proceeding.

The Council also helps the community in various ways e.g. sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means of support. If your work involves any of these you must:

- Give impartial advice at all times and try not to put yourself in a situation where a conflict of interest could arise;
- Declare in the Register of Hospitality/ Sponsorship which is held in the Administration Department as soon as you realize that you, your partner, spouse or other relative could benefit from the proposed sponsorship, grant, aid, support etc.

Personal Appearance

The Council expects employees to observe a standard of personal appearance which is appropriate to the nature of the work undertaken, and which portrays a professional approach which the public will have confidence in.

The Council values and welcomes the ethnic diversity of its workforce and therefore its dress code will take account of ethnic and religious dress requirements with sensitivity ensuring that employees are free to observe them.

Timekeeping

Employees must comply with the Council's standards regarding attendance and absence.

Copyright

All records, documents and other papers which relate to the Council's business, and which are made or obtained by employees in the course of employment are the property of the Council. The copyright on all such original records, documents and papers (including copies and summaries thereof) belongs to the Council.

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on employees whilst they are at work to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others. Consequently, employees are legally bound to comply with all safety rules and instructions set by the Council.

Alcohol, drugs and other substance misuse

The Council wishes to promote the health and well being of employees and minimise problems at work arising from the effect of alcohol, drugs (whether prescribed or illegal), solvents, etc. Employees are encouraged to seek help as soon as they believe they have a problem.

Employees whose performance or behaviour falls below the acceptable standard, or who cause danger or inconvenience as a result as alcohol, drugs or other substance abuse, may be the subject of the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

Employees taking prescribed drugs are required to advise their manager if any such drugs being taken are likely to have an effect on their ability to drive, to use equipment etc as required by their employment with the Council.

Law relating to this document:

Leading Statutory authority: Local Government Act 2000

Debbie Rigby, HR and OD Manager, June 2011