

Officers' Code of Conduct

1. Introduction

The Assistant Director, HR Services, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, shall prepare, maintain and review the Council's Code of Conduct for Officers and refer any proposed changes to the Constitution and Ethics Committee for consideration and recommendation to Full Council.

1.1 The Officers' Code of Conduct defines the standards that the Council expects its employees to abide by. These are often more demanding than those expected by other employers because:

- Council employees are paid from public funds;
- The Council's work is open to public scrutiny and is often politically sensitive. The Council's reputation depends on confidence in Council employees. In practice, one act of corruption can undo years of good work; and
- The Council is often the only access point for services which can have a profound impact on the well-being of people who live in the County – there is often no one else that they can turn to.

1.2 The Code contains the basic rules and principles which govern the way the Council's employees work. Where necessary, examples and explanations are given, but the Code is not an exhaustive list of the standards, and employees may still face disciplinary action for allegations of a similar nature. Breaking some rules are so serious that the Council may consider dismissing employees for a first offence without notice.

1.3 The Code applies to all the Council's employees and is recommended to schools. The Council undertakes to apply the Code's rules consistently and fairly, and expects its managers to apply the Code with rigour to ensure that the integrity of employees is beyond reproach. For example, information given on application forms is checked, and the Council works closely with the police, other local authorities and government departments to detect fraud.

2. Behave Professionally

2.1 All staff are expected to interact and work with the public and colleagues in an appropriate and professional way at all times.

- 2.2 Employees are expected to engender public trust and confidence in the Council and not to bring the organisation into disrepute. This includes action outside of work that is relevant to their job role or that may undermine public confidence in them to carry out their role. They must not knowingly publish or post anything, including on social media that could damage the reputation of the Council.
- 2.3 Employees are expected to co-operate with their manager and comply with all lawful management instructions.
- 2.4 Employees are expected to work in a professional manner with all Councillors, regardless of their political affiliation. If they have, or enter into, a close personal relationship with an Elected Member, they need to disclose this (see Section 11).

3. Act with Honesty and Integrity

- 3.1 Employees are expected to communicate openly and honestly with their line manager about their work.
- 3.2 Employees are expected to submit accurate claims for expenses and allowances – claiming only for payments they are entitled to receive. If they receive any payment in error, for example an overpayment of salary or expenses, they must notify their manager as soon as possible.
- 3.3 Employees must keep accurate records of their working time where this is required.
- 3.4 Employees must not order goods for their own personal use through a Council account. They are not permitted to use their position to obtain a discount for goods or services unless this is part of the Council's recognised employee discount scheme.

4. Act Lawfully

- 4.1 Employees must comply with the law in all aspects of their work.
- 4.2 Employees are required to immediately notify their manager in writing if they are arrested, cautioned, charged or convicted of any crime at any point during their employment. Their manager will assess whether this information has any impact on their job role.
- 4.3 If employees suspect that someone is breaking the law, they must report this by speaking to their line manager in the first instance. Alternatively, they should contact Internal Audit or raise their concerns using the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

- 4.4 If an employee's role involves working in/managing children or adult services, they must inform their manager immediately if they are barred for any reason. If they are working in early years childcare or with/managing later years childcare (for children up to the age of 8 outside the school day), they must tell their manager immediately should they be disqualified from working with children or should someone who lives or works in their household becomes barred.

5. Respect Equality and Diversity

- 5.1 Respecting the equality and diversity of the public and colleagues is very important. Employees are expected to act in accordance with the Council's Respect@Work policy, put the Respect@Work pledge into practice, and promote the Council's commitment to equality and diversity at all times.
- 5.2 Employees must not discriminate against any individual on the basis of their protected characteristic(s) (i.e. because of age, disability, race, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity leave or because of a person's marital or civil partnership status).
- 5.3 Employees should appropriately challenge any discriminatory behaviour that they witness, seeking support from their line manager in the first instance.

6. Contact with the Media

- 6.1 Employees must not make statements to the media on behalf of the Council unless it is their job to do so. All media enquiries should be referred to the Council's Communications Team.

7. Fulfil Safeguarding Responsibilities

- 7.1 The Council is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, and it is essential that employees fully comply with safeguarding policies and procedures. This includes adhering to specific local rules and procedures that apply in their area of work.
- 7.2 If employees have any concerns about any aspects of safeguarding, they must raise these with their line manager in the first instance. Alternatively, they should raise any safeguarding concerns using the Whistleblowing Procedure.

8. Handle Information Securely

- 8.1 The Council has specific rules on data security, outlined in its Information Management Policy, with which employees need to read and familiarise themselves. Employees are required to comply with these rules when handling information.
- 8.2 Employees must not access or use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain.

9. Comply with All Policies, Rules and Procedures

- 9.1 Employees are required to act in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures and comply with local rules that are in place in their area of work.
- IT Policies – (e.g. computer misuse policy, internet policy, email policy, mobile device policy, etc);
 - Health and safety policies and procedures (e.g. the Drug Alcohol and Substance Misuse policy and the Smoke Free Policy);
 - Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy; and
 - All employment policies.

10. Fulfil Management Responsibilities

- 10.1 If employees have line management responsibility, they must make sure their employees are aware of the Officers' Code of Conduct and address any breaches as soon as these occur.

Employees are expected to model the Council's values and behaviours and embed them within their teams, ensuring that the team's work is aligned with corporate priorities.

- 10.2 The Council expects managers to proactively manage any employment issues that arise in their team in accordance with employment policies.
- 10.3 Managers are responsible for proactively managing their team's performance and promptly addressing any performance issues that arise.
- 10.4 Managers must not be involved in making significant decisions in the course of their work that involve a relative, partner or friend. They are not permitted to line manage a partner or family member.

11. Declare Relevant Interests

11.1 Employees are required to declare any private interests and any work that they undertake elsewhere in accordance with the table below.

Situation	Action Required
Undertaking private work (paid or unpaid)	All employees must complete the Private Interests form before doing any private work. Employees on a P Grade (or equivalent) and above must also discuss with their Head of Service the potential impact of additional work on their role with the Council and agree how any potential negative impact will be avoided.
Undertaking consultancy work for another organisation	All employees must obtain permission from their Head of Service prior to undertaking consultancy work.
Potential conflicts of interest Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement with clubs and societies that the Council works with or funds; • Involvement with organisations that provide similar services to the Council; • Directorships, including with companies that are involved with or funded by the Council; and • Relationships with elected Members 	All employees must declare any interests that they have outside of work and discuss with their line manager and agree how any conflicts can be avoided. They must also declare if their partner or a close relative has a potential conflict of interests (for example, if their partner is involved with an organisation that is tendering for work with the Council).

12. Declare Gifts and Hospitality

12.1 Employees must declare any gifts and hospitality that they are offered as detailed in the table below. If they have any doubts about whether they should accept a gift or offer of hospitality, they should speak to their line manager. There may be specific local rules that apply in their team (e.g. to protect vulnerable service users who may feel obliged to give a gift).

Situation	Action Required
Offered a token gift (value of £25 or lower)	Employees must check with their manager if this can be accepted.

	They must complete a declaration form.
Offered a gift that is more than a token gift (value of £25 or above)	<p>Employees must not accept this.</p> <p>They must return gifts that have already been received.</p> <p>They must make a declaration.</p>
Offers of hospitality	<p>Employees may attend a function in an official capacity (for example, a conference related to their job role).</p> <p>Employees must decline any invitations that are primarily or only for social purposes (and that could be viewed as trying to influence their decision making).</p>

13. Data Protection

- 13.1 Any data collected and processed as part of employing and managing employees is held securely. It is accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of completing that specific procedure, process or activity. Records are retained and destroyed in accordance with the Council's Retention Schedule.
- 13.2 Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the Data Protection Policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which may be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

14. Further Information

Employees with questions about the Code of Conduct should speak to their line manager. Managers requiring further guidance should speak to the HR Advisory Team.