

F3 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR OFFICERS

1. General Principles

- 1.1 The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all local government officers. The role of such officers is to serve the Council in providing advice, implementing its policies and delivering services to the local community. In performing their duties, officers must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity.
- 1.2 This Code has been drawn up to provide the Council's officers with guidance on how they will be expected to conduct themselves when carrying out duties and responsibilities associated with their employment. The Code has also been designed to take account of other relevant codes of practice. The term 'officer' refers to all the Council's employees. It also includes consultants and agency staff who work for the Council.
- 1.3 Officers are accountable and owe a duty to the Council as their employer. They must act in accordance with the principles set out in this Code, recognising the duty of all public sector employees to discharge public functions reasonably and according to the law.
- 1.4 Officers must be familiar with and adhere to the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations at **Part F4** of the constitution.
- 1.5 It is not practical to establish requirements that apply to all situations and circumstances and, therefore, the Code should be regarded as covering only the basic principles to be followed.
- 1.6 Directors are responsible for the administration and application of the Code within the service areas for which they are responsible.

2. Openness/Confidentiality

- 2.1 Generally, openness in the dissemination of information and decision making should be normal practice. However, certain information may be confidential or sensitive and therefore should not be disclosed.

- 2.2 Officers have an obligation to respect the confidentiality of information about the Council's affairs acquired in the course of their work. Where confidentiality is necessary to protect the privacy or other rights of individuals or bodies, information should not be released to anyone other than a member or another officer of the Council or a person who is entitled to receive it, or needs access to it for the proper discharge of his/her functions.
- 2.3 Officers must not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.
- 2.4 Nothing in this Code can be taken as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to divulge certain information or to keep certain information confidential.

3. Conflicts of Interest

- 3.1 Officers must not allow their private interests to conflict with their professional duty. They must not use their official position or information acquired in the course of their employment to further their private interests or the interests of others.
- 3.2 If officers find themselves in a situation which could give rise to a conflict of interest between themselves, or some other person, and the Council, then the matter must be reported in the first instance to their immediate line manager and the Monitoring Officer. If the problem cannot be resolved then the position must be reported immediately to their Assistant Director.
- 3.3 All potential conflict of interests **must** be declared and registered with the Council and be made available for Members' inspection.

4. Interests in Contracts

- 4.1 Employees must give immediate notice to the Council if it comes to their knowledge that they have a pecuniary interest in a contract that has been or is proposed to be entered into by the Council.

5. Hospitality and Gifts

- 5.1 In undertaking their duties officers may be offered gifts or hospitality from persons or organisations having, or proposing to have, a contractual or client relationship with the Council. Such offers could be made to gain an advantage over another person or organisation or could be construed as such and therefore must not be accepted without prior approval from an appropriate Assistant Director.
- 5.2 If officers receive a gift of any description then this must be made known to their Assistant Director who will decide on the course of action to be taken. Likewise only hospitality for which prior approval has been given by your Assistant Director should be accepted from outside persons or organisations. Small gifts, such as pens, calendars, diaries etc, provided they are not of material value, need not be declared.
- 5.3 The Gifts and Hospitality form must be completed and ANY gifts or hospitality agreed and accepted will be recorded in writing in the register maintained by each Director for their service areas. The Chief Executive and all Directors should record the receipt of any gifts or hospitality they receive in the register maintained by the Monitoring Officer.

6. Integrity and Personal Conduct

- 6.1 Off-duty hours are the concern of officers but conduct at all times must not in any way bring the Council into disrepute or weaken the public's confidence in officers or the Council.
- 6.2 Certain officers are required by their contract of employment to devote their whole time to the work of the Council. However, officers employed in a relatively junior capacity may be able to undertake other additional work or employment, provided prior approval is obtained from their Assistant Director. However, any such employment must not conflict with the Council's interests or in any way weaken public confidence in the Council.
- 6.3 Officers must not advise any political group of the Council either about the work of the group or about the work of the directorate, without the prior consent of their Assistant Director. Personal political activities must not in any way bring the Council into disrepute.
- 6.4 Certain posts are politically restricted under Section 2 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and officers who are subject to these political restrictions must comply with the statutory restrictions on their political activities.

7. Stewardship

7.1 An officer must:-

7.1.1 Use any public funds entrusted to or handled by him/her in a responsible and lawful manner;

7.1.2 Not make personal use of any property or facilities of the Council unless properly authorised to do so.

8. Aims, Visions and Values

8.1 Officers must follow and uphold the core values and expected standards of behaviour of the Council in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

9. Accountability

9.1 Officers are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner professionally; recognising that at all times when they are representing the Council they are ambassadors for the organisation.

9.2 At all times officers are accountable to the Council for their actions.

10. Competence

10.1 Officers are encouraged to develop to their full potential and ability and be supported with suitable training and development. If they are worried about their ability to perform a particular task in the course of their employment, then no action should be taken until they have sought adequate advice and assistance to enable them to do so satisfactorily.

10.2 While the above advice is intended to help, it must not be interpreted as a right for officers to refuse to undertake duties and responsibilities that may be reasonably allocated to them by their manager.

11. Equality and Respect for Others

11.1 Officers must comply with the Council's policies relating to equality issues.

11.2 Officers must at all times:-

11.2.1 Treat others with respect;

11.2.2 Not discriminate unlawfully against any person; and

11.2.3 Treat members and co-opted members of the Authority professionally.

12. Working relationships

12.1 Officers should always try to be fair and not allow prejudice or bias to influence them in carrying out their work. They must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

12.2 Officers should deal with members of the public sympathetically, efficiently and without bias.

12.3 Mutual respect between officers and members of the Council is essential to good local government and working relationships should be kept on a professional basis.

13. Whistleblowing/Confidential Reporting Procedure

13.1 Where an officer becomes aware of activities which he/she believes to be illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent with this Code, he/she should report the matter acting in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, the Council's confidential reporting ('whistleblowing') procedure and any other procedure designed for this purpose.

13.2 An officer must not discriminate against another officer by reason of the fact that the other officer has done, intends to do, or is suspected of doing anything under or by reference to Council's procedure for reporting misconduct or under the Council's confidential reporting procedure.

14. Appointment of Staff

14.1 When involved in the recruitment and appointment of staff, officers must ensure that appointments are made on the basis of merit.

14.2 In order to avoid any accusation of bias, an officer must not be involved in the appointment of or in any other decision relating to the discipline, promotion, pay or conditions of another officer, or prospective employee, to whom he/she is related or with whom he/she has a close personal relationship outside work.

Note: This Code is to be read in conjunction with the **Council's Procedure Rules, Terms of Conditions of Employment** and **Statute Law** where applicable.