

PART 7 – THE CODES PROTOCOLS AND ADVICE

C – OFFICERS’ CODE OF CONDUCT

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Code of Conduct for Employees

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all staff who work in Local Government and therefore from all staff who work for the Royal Borough. The role of all employees is to serve the Council by providing advice, implementing Council policies and delivering services to the local community. In performing these duties all our staff are required to act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity.
- 1.2 Under section 82 of the Local Government Act 2000, the Secretary of State has powers to issue a statutory code of conduct for employees of local authorities. At present only a draft code exists. This code of conduct reflects the principles contained within the draft code and refers you to existing Council policies, procedures, guidelines, regulations etc that govern the way we work.
- 1.3 It is not the intention that the contents of this code conflict with other statutory or professional codes of conduct. Where membership of a Professional Association is required as part of a post holder's accountabilities, any Professional Code of Conduct will be deemed to be part of the Council's Code of Conduct. In the event you feel that there is a conflict between your Professional Code of Conduct and the Council's Code of Conduct, advice should be sought in the first instance from your line manager.

2. Accountability

- 2.1 Employees must be accountable to the Council for their actions. Therefore, you are required to act in accordance with this code and any other relevant policies, procedures, guidelines, regulations etc, in recognition of your responsibility as a Council employee in undertaking and delivering your public duties.
- 2.2 The aim of this code is to:
 - Promote the highest standards in public life and engender confidence in the Council and our employees
 - Promote good and effective working relationships
 - Protect our employees from misunderstanding or criticism.

Although this code cannot be exhaustive, its intention is to provide sufficient information to make you aware of what is required of you. Therefore, if in any doubt, you should consult your line manager.

- 2.4 This code applies to all Council employees.
- 2.5 Any breach of this code will be investigated under the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and appropriate action taken if required.

3. Political Neutrality

- 3.1 All employees, whether or not 'politically restricted' (see 3.4) must follow Council policies and you must not allow your own personal or political opinions to interfere with your work.
- 3.2 All employees serve the authority as a whole. Therefore, you are required to serve all Members and not just those of the controlling group or groups and must ensure that the individual rights of all Members are respected. For further information, you are referred to Part 7 D Member/Officer Protocol, in the Council's Constitution.
- 3.3 Political Assistants appointed on fixed term contracts in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, shall be exempt from Section 3 of this code.
- 3.4 The Local Government Officers (Political Restriction) Regulations 1990 SI1990/881 as amended and the Local Government (Politically Restricted Posts)(No2) Regulations 1990 impose restrictions on political activities of certain employees. These are known as Politically Restricted posts. Where relevant, this information is included in contracts of employment and information is provided to individual employees as appropriate.

4. Relationships

4.1 The Local Community and Service Users

You must remember your responsibilities to the community you serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all individuals and groups as defined by Council policies, procedures etc.

4.2 Contractors

Contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against others tenders and no special favours shown in the tendering process to businesses run by, for example friends, relatives, partners etc. You are required to comply with the Business Dealings with Personal Associates and Declarations of Interest policy when dealing with any potential or actual contractors.

4.3 Members

Mutual respect between employees and Members is essential to good local government, and working relationships should be kept on a professional basis. Close personal familiarity between employees and individual Members can damage that relationship and prove embarrassing to other employees and Members. Therefore, close personal friendships should be avoided. For further information, you are referred to Part 7 D, Member /Officer Protocol..

4.4 Media

You must comply with the Council's Media Protocol, which sets out the requirements in relation to dealings with the media. Further advice is also available in the Private Work and Conduct guidance.

5. Equality

- 5.1 All employees are required to ensure that the Council's policies relating to equality issues are complied with in addition to the requirements of relevant legislation. All members of the local community, customers and other employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equality. We expect each member of staff to create a positive climate in the workplace where individual differences are respected and valued.
- 5.2 The Council's requirements in respect of equalities is set out in our Equality and Diversity policy as well as our Dignity at Work Policy.

6. Use of Resources

- 6.1 All staff must ensure that they use public funds and/or resources entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner.
- 6.2 The personal use of Council property, resources, vehicles or other facilities is not permitted unless authorised to do so by a Director.
- 6.3 Employees must strive to achieve value for money for the local community.
- 6.4 The use of resources is defined within such documents as: the Council's Constitution; Contract Standing Orders; Financial Regulations/Standing Orders; Expenses Policy; Information Security Policies, including Physical Security Policy; IT Access Security Policy; Remote Working Policy; Use of Email Policy; Use of Internet Policy; Use of Mobile Phone Policy, and the Care and Use of Council Owned Equipment Policy. This is not an exhaustive list.

7. Avoiding Fraud and Corruption

- 7.1 In addition to Section 6, it must be understood that it is a criminal offence for you, in your capacity as an employee of the Council, to receive or bestow any personal advantage as part of your day to day role and responsibilities. In order to ensure that you understand the issues associated with fraud and corruption, you should refer to the Council's Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy and the Guidance Notes on Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption for Employees. This document has been updated to reflect the requirements of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 7.2 The guidance notes referred to in 7.1 also contain advice in relation to the acceptance and giving of gifts and hospitality.

- 7.3 Whilst the private lives of employees are their own concern, we cannot allow private interests to conflict with your and our public duty. You are referred to the Council's guidance on Private Work and Conduct; Business Dealings with Personal Associates; Declarations of Interest and the Social Media Policy.
- 7.4 Employees involved in tendering processes and dealing with contractors must operate within the Council's Constitution, Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations/Standing Orders. Advice and guidance are available from the Procurement and Legal services.

9. Raising Concerns at Work (Whistleblowing)

- 8.1 Should you become aware of activities you believe to be fraudulent, not in accordance with Council policy or inconsistent with this code, you should use the Council's Raising Concerns at Work (Whistleblowing Policy) to raise your concerns.
- 8.2 Treatment of Information
- 8.3 This Council strives to deliver open government. The law requires that certain types of information must be made available to Members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. The Council itself may decide to be open about other types of information. Staff will be advised through the publication of policies and Council communications what information is, or is not open, and must act accordingly.
- 8.4 You must not use any information obtained in the course of your employment for personal gain or benefit, nor must it be passed to others who may use it in such a way.
- 8.5 The Council's policy on the disclosure of personal information is contained in the Use and Disclosure of Personal Information policy.
- 8.6 When using information you must be mindful of the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Advice on which is contained in the Data Protection Guidance for Employees and the various Information Security policies.
- 8.7 You are also referred to the Council's policy on the Use of Email and Guidance to Officers Speaking at Conferences.
- 8.8 Nothing in this section should be seen to conflict with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

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10 Appointment of Staff

- 10.1 Employees involved in appointments should ensure compliance with the Council's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and ensure that appointments are made on the basis of merit. To avoid any possible accusation of bias, you should not be involved in an appointment where you are related to an applicant, or have a personal relationship outside work.
- 10.2 Similarly, there should be no involvement with decisions relating to discipline, grievance, promotions or pay adjustments for other employees who are relatives, partners or with whom you have a personal relationship outside work.

11 Safety and Security

- 11.1 As your employer, the Council has a legal responsibility to safeguard as far as reasonably practicable, your health, safety and welfare whilst at work. Similarly, you too have a responsibility for your own safety and that of others. For further information refer to the Corporate Health and Safety Policy and any local Health and Safety Policies produced by your own directorate/service area.
- 11.2 You are required to adhere to the Council's Physical Security Policy and to wear your identification badges whilst on Council premises or whilst performing your duties.
- 11.3 You are required to comply with the Council's Care and Use of Council Owned Equipment Policy.

12 Standard of Appearance

- 12.1 The Council expects high standards of appearance from you whilst undertaking your duties. You are expected to dress professionally, in a suitable manner and appropriately for the job you undertake.
- 12.2 Uniforms, if issued, must be worn and maintained appropriately.

13 Further Information

- 13.1 All the documents referred to in this Code of Conduct are available on the Council's intranet and you must familiarise yourself with these documents. The list below does not necessarily represent a full and complete list of relevant documents. It will be reviewed and updated as required, but employees are required to consider any relevant policies and procedures that may impact on this Code of Conduct.
- 13.2 Should you have any queries regarding these documents, please refer them to your line manager in the first instance. Further clarification can then be sought from the relevant service area:

| Document | Contact | Access to document via |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy and Guidance Notes | Audit and Review | SharePoint |
| Business Dealings with Personal Associates and Declarations of Interest | HR | SharePoint |
| Care and Use of Council Owned Equipment Policy | HR | SharePoint |
| Equality and Diversity Policy | Strategy & Performance | SharePoint |
| Constitution | Monitoring Officer | Website |
| Contract Standing Orders | Procurement | Constitution Part 8 A |
| Media Protocol | Communications & Marketing | SharePoint |
| Corporate Health and Safety Policy | HR – H&S | SharePoint |
| Data Protection Policy | RBWM Data Protection Officer | SharePoint |
| Dignity at Work | HR | SharePoint |

| Document | Contact | Access to document via |
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| Disciplinary Policy and Procedure | HR | SharePoint |
| Expenses Policy | HR | SharePoint |
| Financial Regulations | Accountancy | SharePoint |
| Freedom of Information | Information Governance | SharePoint |
| Media Protocol (Appendix to Communications Strategy) | Communications & Marketing | SharePoint |
| Officers speaking at conferences – guidance | HR | SharePoint |
| Politically Restricted Posts | HR | SharePoint |
| Private Work and Conduct | HR | SharePoint |
| Procurement Strategy and associated documents | Procurement | SharePoint |
| Raising Concerns at Work (Whistle Blowing policy) | Audit and Review or HR | SharePoint |
| Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice | HR | SharePoint |
| Information Security Policy | Information Governance | Service area |
| Physical Security Policy | | |
| IT Access Security Policy | Information Governance | Service area |
| Remote Working Policy | Information Governance | Service area |
| Use of Internet Policy | Information Governance | Service area |
| Use of E mail Policy | Information Governance | Service area |

13.3 Should you have any queries regarding this Code, please refer these to your Line Manager in the first instance, and any further clarification, if needed, can be sought from HR.