

# Code of Conduct – Officers

May 2020 reviewed

Next review May 2021

## 1. Behaviour at Work

- 1.1 We must all behave with civility towards others. Employees should always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within that community as defined by the policies of the authority.
- 1.2 Rudeness or abuse of any description cannot be tolerated from or towards other members of staff, Councillors or members of the public.
- 1.3 All reasonable instructions from an employee's line manager are to be carried out.
- 1.4 Any incidence of harassment, abuse, victimisation or intimidation will be investigated and sanctions imposed on the perpetrator(s) through the proceedings open to the Council by its internal processes or in law as outlined in the Dignity at Work/Bullying and Harassment Policy (Section 13 Staff Handbook).

## 2. Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

- 2.1 Staff should not at any time bring onto the Council premises any alcohol or drugs (other than those prescribed by their doctor). Intoxication at work either as a result of alcohol or drugs will result in disciplinary action.

## 3. Relationships at Work

- 3.1 Close personal familiarity between employees and/or between employees and individual Councillors can damage the working relationships and prove embarrassing to other employees and Councillors and should therefore be avoided.

## 4. Confidentiality

- 4.1 Any information which:
  - (a) is or has been acquired by an employee during or in the course of their employment, or has otherwise been acquired by them in confidence;
  - (b) has not been made public by the Council, or an employee has not been authorised to disclose

shall be confidential and, unless required by law, an employee shall not, either before or after the termination of their employment, disclose such information to any person without prior written consent. Staff shall exercise reasonable care to keep safe all documents or other material containing confidential information, and on the termination of their employment, or at any other time, upon demand return to us any such material in their possession.

## **5. Statements to the Press/Media**

- 5.1 Staff must not make any statements to the press or media without the prior clearance and authority of the Council.

## **6. Political Neutrality**

- 6.1 Employees serve the authority as a whole. It follows they must serve all Councillors equally, and must ensure that the individual rights of all Councillors are respected. Subject to the Council's conventions, employees may also be required to advise political groups. They must do so in ways which do not compromise their political neutrality. Employees, whether or not politically restricted, must follow every lawful expressed policy of the authority and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

## **7. Appointment and Other Employment Matters**

- 7.1 Employees involved in appointments should ensure that these are made on the basis of merit. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees should not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship outside work with him or her. Similarly, employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a relative, partner, etc.

## **8. Trade Union Membership**

- 8.1 Employees are under no obligation to join a trade union.
- 8.2 Employees are free to join or not join any trade union of their choice.
- 8.3 An employee who is an official of an independent trade union recognised by the employer must be granted time off to attend to duties.
- 8.4 An employee who is a learning representative of the trade union recognised by the employer must be granted time off under TULRCA 1992 s.168A, as inserted by s.43 of the Employment Act 2002 for the purpose of analysis of learning and training needs, the provision of information and advice on learning and training matters, the promotion of the values of learning and training. The employer's obligation to allow time off is subject to a reasonable test.

## **9. Personal Interests**

- 9.1 Employees must declare to the Clerk any financial interests which could conflict with the Council's interests. Employees should also declare to the Clerk membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules or membership or conduct.

## **10. Discrimination and Equality Issues**

- 10.1 All Council employees should ensure that policies relating to equality issues as agreed by the Council are complied with in the spirit as well as the letter of the law.
- 10.2 All members of the local community, customers and other employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity.

## **11. Council Property**

- 11.2 Use of Council property for a purpose other than normal duties is not permitted.
- 11.3 No property is to be taken away from Council premises without prior explicit permission.

## **12. Intellectual Property**

12.1 Employees should take advice on the ownership of intellectual property or copyright created during their employment.

## **13. Use of Financial Resources**

13.1 Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner. They should strive to ensure value for money to the local community.

## **14. Contractors and Tendering**

14.1 All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, should be made known to the Town Clerk. Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenders, and no special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives in the tendering process. No part of the local community should be discriminated against. Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, should declare that relationship to the Town Clerk.

14.2 Employees involved with tendering processes must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors. Employees who are privy to confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors should not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

14.3 Employees should 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.

## **15. Corruption**

15.1 Employees must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence for them corruptly to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing, or not doing, anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person in their official capacity. If an allegation is made it is for the employee to demonstrate that any such rewards have not been corruptly obtained and such allegations, if proven, will be treated as instances of gross misconduct.

## **16. Hospitality**

16.1 Employees should only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the local council in the community. Offers to attend purely social or sporting functions should be accepted only when these are part of the life of the community or where the authority should be seen to be represented. They should be properly authorised and recorded. Acceptance by employees of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal, where the Council gives consent to attendance in advance, and where purchasing decisions are not compromised. Where visits to inspect equipment, etc. are required, employees should ensure that Council meet the cost of such visits to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions.

16.2 When hospitality has to be declined, those making the offer should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operating within the Council. Employees should not accept significant personal gifts from contractors and outside suppliers, although you may keep insignificant items of token value such as pens, diaries, etc.

## **17. Sponsorship – Giving and Receiving**

- 17.1 Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a Council activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.
- 17.2 Where the Council wishes to sponsor an event or service, neither an employee nor any partner, spouse or relative must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way without there being full disclosure to an appropriate manager of any such interest. Similarly, where the Council through sponsorship, grants, aid, or by other means, gives support in the community, employees should ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

## **18. Outside Commitments**

- 18.1 All employees have a duty to advise the Town Clerk if they become engaged or concerned in any other business, whether or not the duties may conflict with the interests of the Council.