

SECTION 12 - CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

I confirm I have read and understood this code of conduct

Employee's name

Employee's signature

Date

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 As a good employer, the Council recognises its responsibilities to its employees. The Council also has responsibilities to the community which it serves and therefore expects its employees to work to the highest standards of integrity. This code is intended to outline good practice and offer guidance to protect employees and the Council from situations where the employment contract could be breached.
- 1.2 Compliance with the code is an explicit requirement within the conditions of employment of all Council employees. The matters covered in this code are comprehensive but are not to be considered as being exhaustive. Employees should assume that conduct or actions which are not specified but which are similar to those described or relate to similar standards and principles to those set out in the code, are also covered.
- 1.3 The code has been developed to ensure that honesty, integrity and high standards of personal conduct and behaviour are maintained at all times. The key factors are that you:
- should seek advice from your manager if you have difficulty understanding the code or complying with it
 - realise that if you fail to observe the rules and guidance contained in this code you may be liable to disciplinary action which could lead to your dismissal.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This code applies to all Council employees. Agency temporary workers and contractors are also expected to comply with all aspects of this code. The code includes some provisions which will apply even after you have left the Council's employment – please refer to section 13.

3. Our Values and Behaviours

- 3.1 It is the responsibility of each employee to manage their behaviour and conduct to meet the expected standards and to ensure that they consistently adhere to the Council's **CORE** values
- **Collaborative**
 - **Open**
 - **Responsible**
 - **Excellent**
- 3.2 Behaviours are the actions and deeds that make us successful in our roles and enables the Council to deliver its priorities. Some of the behaviours that demonstrate our commitment to the CORE values and those that are not acceptable are listed in the values and behaviours section on the intranet.

3.3 We are committed to challenging attitudes and behaviours that do not reflect, or which may undermine, our CORE values.

3.4 As an employee you are also expected to uphold the following standards:

- **of service** - to work in accordance with your contract
- **to comply** - to act in accordance with Council policies and procedures and to follow reasonable instructions
- **of care** - to be competent, capable and not be negligent at work
- **to uphold the law** – to act in accordance with legislation
- **in the public interest** – you must never use your position to make gains for yourself, family or friends or others. This includes financial benefits, preferential treatment or any other advantage
- **leadership** – promote and support these standards by example
- **honesty and integrity** – you must not get into a position where your integrity could be questioned
- **gifts and hospitality** – you should not accept fees, commissions, gifts or hospitality – see section 16 below
- **objective decisions** – any decision you make must be made solely on merit
- **accountability** – accept accountability for your decisions, actions behaviour and conduct
- **confidentiality** – must be maintained at all times. You must work within the rules of the UK General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection 2018. You must not pass on or share confidential information with anyone who does not need to have access to the information for work purposes. You must never share confidential information with anyone for personal / private purposes.

3.5 At all times employees must bear in mind the need to uphold the reputation of the Council and not do anything which would bring the Council into disrepute or raise, in the eyes of the public, any potential for disrepute. This requirement also applies to activities outside work where the employee's employment with the Council could be an issue, including being in debt arrears (for example rent and council tax).

3.6 You are expected to co-operate and make yourself available to attend any internal request to attend meetings, interviews or hearings convened under any of the Council's policies and procedures (e.g. grievance, disciplinary and respect at work policies and procedures). You must not seek to involve a Councillor or MP in these processes to influence the outcome.

4 Your responsibilities

4.1 You must ensure that you keep your personal details up to date in MyView. This includes details of your current home address, telephone and / or mobile number(s).

- 4.2 All employees are expected to actively participate in the broader objectives of the Council, including Election duties and attending briefings and events.
- 4.3 All employees are encouraged to take responsibility for developing their own potential through involvement in learning and development activities.
- 4.4 All employees are required to undertake mandatory training, as directed.

5. Arrests, cautions and convictions

- 5.1 You must inform your manager or Human Resources immediately by telephone and confirm this in writing as soon as possible if:
 - you are arrested by the Police
 - the Police impose a sanction against you such as a caution
 - you appear before a magistrate or other criminal court, whether or not any penalty or sanction is imposed

Any information you give about these matters will be treated as confidential.

- 5.2 In relation to traffic offences, you are required to inform the Council and update the driving at work portal about any penalty or sanction imposed, including any points imposed on your licence. This requirement excludes parking offences and fixed penalty notices.

6. Relationships

- 6.1 Mutual respect between Councillors and officers is essential for the delivery of good local government. Close personal familiarity between individual councillors and officers can damage this relationship and should be avoided. Close working relationships should never become so close, or appear to become so close, as to bring into question the officer's ability to deal impartially with another councillor or other party groups, nor to undermine public trust in the Council. Where such relationships exist or develop over time they should never be hidden. Officers should declare such relationships to their Executive Director / Human Resources in writing. This includes any family relationships.

Please refer to the [Protocol on Member Officer Relations.pdf \(welhat.gov.uk\)](https://www.welhat.gov.uk/protocol-on-member-officer-relations.pdf)

- 6.2 If during the course of your employment you develop a close personal relationship with a member of the Senior Management Team, a Councillor or one of your immediate colleagues you must report it to your manager or Human Resources. If the relationship is with your line manager, you must report it to Human Resources straightaway. Alternative management arrangements may need to be put in place to prevent potential problems or accusations of bias.
- 6.3 Employees should not be involved in any appointment, decisions relating to pay and conditions, discipline or promotion for any employee who is a relative,

partner etc. If this is not possible during the recruitment and selection process, the relationship must be declared to other panel members at the start of the process.

- 6.4 All relationships with external contractors / service providers (or potential contractors / service providers), of a business or personal nature must be made known to the appropriate line manager and to the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) straightaway.

7. Avoiding conflicts of interest

- 7.1 You must avoid any personal or business interest which conflicts with the Council's interest. This covers any circumstance where an individual could in theory receive a personal or business benefit as a consequence of any Council activity.

- 7.2 You must not

- misuse your official position or information acquired in the course of your work to further your private interest or the interests of others, including making private recommendations to customers for services.
- use Council resources or facilities for unrelated business or personal use.
- deal with Housing / Planning related matters for people you have a close personal relationship with, and you must make your manager aware of these connections so that where necessary, work can be reallocated.

- 7.3 You must:

- be especially careful of relationships with customers. You must never allow yourself to be compromised by, nor take advantage of, relationships with customers. You must always be mindful of the possible impact this may have on the Council.
- complete an annual Declaration of Interest form if you are part of the Leadership team or are involved in procurement on behalf of the Council.
- complete a Declaration of Interest form if you identify an interest which you have that might conflict with the Council's interest.

- 7.4 Examples of interests which you must declare include:

- an interest in any property being managed or purchased by the Council
- an interest in any company selling or being an agent for any property being managed or purchased by the Council
- a business relationship with any person or firm earning fees from work placed by the Council
- a business relationship with any person or firm entering into a contract to carry out work or provide services for the Council
- any other private work or second job.

- 7.5 If you wish to undertake other private work or a second job, you must get permission in writing from your Executive Director, in consultation with HR. The Council will not preclude employees undertaking additional employment unless any such employment actually or potentially, in the Council's view, conflicts or reacts detrimentally to the Council's interests, or in any way weakens the confidence of the public and / or other external parties in the Council's business, i.e. whether confidence could reasonably be said to be weakened.
- 7.6 The interests listed above are not exhaustive. Where there is doubt as to whether or not a conflict of interest arises, the Assistant Director (Legal & Governance) will advise on how to proceed.

8. Health and Safety

- 8.1 You have a duty to protect your own health and safety as well as that of your colleagues and members of the general public who are engaging with the Council. You must co-operate with the Council to enable it to fulfil its own responsibilities to you and other parties.
- 8.2 You must follow the law and the Council's Health and Safety policies.
- 8.3 You are required to follow safe working practices, ensure compliance with relevant legislation and assist management by promptly bringing to their notice any work hazard which could result in injury to persons or damage to equipment or property.

9. Standards of personal appearance and clothing

- 9.1 All employees are responsible for their general presentation, appearance and personal hygiene and have a responsibility to consider how others may perceive their appearance. You must ensure that your standards of appearance, personal hygiene and clothes are appropriate to the nature of your duties and responsibilities and project a positive image of the Council as a professional organisation.
- 9.2 All employees are issued with photographic identity passes when they commence employment with the Council. Photographic ID passes must be shown when representing the Council at external meetings, site visits and to gain access to offices at various locations.

10. Alcohol and Drugs

- 10.1 Employees reporting for work have a responsibility to be fit, capable and presentable to undertake their duties. Consumption of alcohol or the use of drugs can impair performance at work, increasing the likelihood of accidents or mistakes which may endanger colleagues or members of the public.

10.2 You must not misuse any of the following substances before you come to work or during your working hours:

- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- other substances that mimic the effect of illegal drugs or other volatile substances such as gas lighter refills or glue
- legal medication or drugs which have not been prescribed for you by a medical practitioner

10.3 You must not give drugs which have been prescribed for your personal use to another employee / colleague.

10.4 Please refer to the Substance Misuse Policy for further information.

10.5 You must inform your manager immediately if you need to take drugs or medicines which may affect your ability to carry out your duties effectively.

11. Valuing Diversity

11.1 The Council is committed to championing inclusion, equality and embracing diversity, both as a service provider and employer.

11.2 You must not discriminate against any sector of the community either in providing access to services, through the delivery of that service or in employment.

12. Political neutrality

12.1 You must adhere to the Council's policies and procedures and must not allow your own personal or political opinions to interfere with your work and must ensure that the individual rights of Councillors are respected.

12.2 Employees are expected to give appropriate advice to Councillors, fellow employees / colleagues and the public with impartiality.

12.3 Employees must neither seek to use undue influence on an individual Member to make a decision in their favour, nor raise personal matters to do with their employment. The Council has formal procedures for consultation, grievance and discipline. Employees have the right to report possible wrongdoing under the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

12.4 If you hold a politically restricted post you must comply with the statutory restrictions on your political activities.

13. Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information

- 13.1 The law requires certain types of information to be available to Councillors, auditors, government departments, service users and the public.
- 13.2 All employees who process personal and sensitive data must maintain compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Please refer to the Data Protection Policy.
- 13.3 All employees are responsible for ensuring that any request for information they receive is dealt with in line with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, and in compliance with the Council's FOIA policy.
- 13.4 Under no circumstances should the following information be disclosed without the prior agreement of your manager and Governance Services Manager:
- confidential committee reports
 - information relating to employees other than where the employee has given specific permission or there is a requirement to do so within the Data Matching Framework
 - personal information relating to service users
 - information which could be prejudicial to the Council
 - any other papers given in confidence
 - contractual information relating to our partners
- 13.5 If there is any doubt about the type of information to be disclosed, there is a duty on employees to check with their manager before making any disclosure. The Assistant Director (Legal & Governance) will be the final judge of what may or may not be disclosed.
- 13.6 Employees must not use any information about the Council obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way.

14. Preventing bribery and Corruption

- 14.1 Employees must comply with the Anti Fraud and Corruption policy. You must not bribe, or attempt to bribe, another person, intending either to obtain or retain business for the Council. You must not accept a bribe or allow another person to accept a bribe in any form, including, but not limited to: cash, gifts, business trips or tickets to events.

15. Responsible reporting and whistle blowing

- 15.1 If something is troubling you, which you think we should know about or look into, please report it to your manager or use the whistle blowing policy. The whistle blowing policy is primarily for concerns or if you become aware of activities which you believe to be illegal, improper or unethical.

15.2 If, however, you wish to make a complaint about your employment or how you have been treated, please use the grievance policy.

16. Gifts, hospitality and sponsorship

16.1 You must not accept gifts, benefits or hospitality. You may only accept modest gifts usually of a promotional nature and given to a wide range of people e.g. calendars, pens and other small items of low value with Executive Director approval.

16.2 If an employee receives a gift without warning, which does not fall in any of the exceptions mentioned above, this should be reported to an Executive Director who will decide whether it should be returned or could be forwarded to the Mayor's charity. In such cases, the Director concerned should inform the donor what has happened to the gift, explain why and kindly ask them not send gifts in future.

16.3 You must report all gifts, benefits or hospitality offered to or received by you on the register of gifts or hospitality held by the Governance Services Manager. Employees must record the following information as soon as is practical to do so:

- Name of the employee
- Name of provider of hospitality/gift
- Circumstances
- Approximate value of the gift(s)
- Whether the hospitality / gift was accepted or rejected
- Name of the Director authorising acceptance

16.4 If in doubt, the details should be discussed with the Assistant Director (Legal & Governance).

17. Sponsorship

17.1 Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a Council activity, the same principles concerning the acceptance of gifts and hospitality apply.

17.2 Where the Council wishes to sponsor an event or service, no employee (or member of their close family) must benefit from the sponsorship. If this is likely, written authorisation must be obtained from a Director before proceeding.

18. Holding public office

18.1 If you wish to seek public office either elected (e.g. local councillor) or not elected (e.g. a magistrate) you must put your request in writing to your Executive Director so that it can be considered. Written authorisation must be obtained from an Executive Director before proceeding.

19. Use of Council equipment and resources

- 19.1 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 and to avoid exposing the Council to risk of legal challenge.
- 19.2 Absolutely no external work unrelated to Council business or for personal gain must be undertaken in work time. Use of any Council office facilities for non Council work purposes is expressly forbidden.
- 19.3 If you are asked to give lectures outside your normal job requirements in your own or the council's time on matters directly concerning your job you must obtain your Executive Director's approval in advance and ensure that any fees for acting in an official capacity are paid to the council.
- 19.4 Any employee found to have deliberately, recklessly or negligently introduced a virus into the Council's IT systems will be subject to the Disciplinary Policy & Procedure.
- 19.5 The Council requires all employees to be proficient in the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT). The Council allows employees to use ICT for personal use but only outside of work hours and at lunchtimes. Please refer to the Acceptable use of ICT policy.
- 19.6 You must not steal money, resources of any description or time from the council or defraud the Council in any other way or distort, hide or destroy records to cover up theft or fraud by you or another party. This includes misuse of the flexible working arrangements or the falsification of records such as flexi time sheets. Theft of time is considered a serious offence.

20. Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 20.1 The Children's Act 2004 and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, together with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2009 requires the local authority to ensure that every employee understands the processes and policies surrounding safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable adults.

21. Contracts and Tendering

- 21.1 Contracts must be awarded in accordance with UK relevant laws and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. The tendering procedure should be applied equally to all potential bidders.
- 21.2 If you have access to confidential information on tenders or costs for contractors you must not disclose such information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

- 21.3 If you have any official relationship with any contractor who is taking part in a tendering process and / or you have previously had or, currently have a relationship in a private capacity with any such contractor (or senior member of such contractors' staff), you must declare that relationship to the Assistant Director (Legal & Governance), by completing the necessary declaration of interests form.
- 21.4 Where visits to inspect potential contractor's premises or equipment are required, you must ensure that the Council meets the cost of such visits to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions.
- 21.5 It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that any offers are communicated to their manager, and if accepted, entered into the gifts & hospitality register to prevent any suspicion of dishonesty and to protect employees from suspicion,

22. Contact with the press

- 22.1 Any contact by the press should be referred to the Communications team. Employees must not speak to the press in their official capacity unless authorised to do so by their Executive Director, in agreement with the Communications Team.

23. Communications

- 23.1 Any communications that employees make either in a business or personal capacity, including social media websites must not:
- bring the Council into disrepute e.g. criticising colleagues or customers, making defamatory statements or posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content
 - breach confidentiality
 - be discriminatory
- 23.2 If you wish to write to a newspaper or other journal or publish or authorise the publication of any book or article where you could be identified as a Council employee, you must obtain permission from your Executive Director. If you wish to write a letter to the local press in your capacity as a local resident you should make this clear, and not use any information in support of your views which you could only have accessed through your work for the Council.
- 23.3 When acting in a personal capacity or as a spokesperson for a private group you must consider any possible conflict of interest between genuine personal interests and your employment with the Council and must not publicise any information or documentation gained in the course of employment which is not otherwise in the public domain.

24. Intellectual property rights, copyright etc

- 24.1 Any intellectual property rights created by you in the course of your employment will be owned by the Council including inventions, patents or copyright.
- 24.2 You must not infringe copyright. Downloading, copying and / or distributing copyright material including electronic files are prohibited unless you have the correct license or permission.
- 24.3 Use of IT assets must be in line with the Council's Acceptable Use of IT Policy.

25 Trade Unions

- 25.1 The council recognises the following Trade Unions
- Unison
 - GMB
- 25.2 We support meaningful consultation and feedback with Trade Union representatives through the Joint Consultative Committee. We also recognise the legitimate role of the trade unions to raise concerns and protect the interests of their Members.