



Stafford
BOROUGH COUNCIL

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

INTRODUCTION

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of professionalism, honesty and integrity from all employees who work for the Council. This Code outlines existing laws, regulations and local conditions of service and provides useful and practical guidance to employees in undertaking their day-to-day work.

The Code has been formally approved by the Council and has been subject to consultation with appropriate trade union representatives. The Code is not exhaustive and should be considered alongside other relevant documents including the Council's Procedure Rules and The Protocol on Member/Officer Relations, which form part of the Constitution; and the Anti Fraud and Corruption and Whistleblowing Policies.

This Code is intended to assist and guide Council employees in their dealings with the public, Members of the Council and their colleagues and is in no way intended to reflect any lack of confidence in their honesty and integrity.

If formal action is considered necessary as a result of infringement of the Code, then the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's approved Disciplinary Procedures.

The Code generally applies to employees when they are at work or otherwise acting in the course of their employment. In general an employees personal life away from work is not a matter for the Council. However, employees need to have regard to the Code when matters in their personal life could lead to conflicts of interest with their employment.

The Council has adopted a statement of its core values, which sets out how employer and employee should:

- Work together as one team
- Focus on Customers
- Positively promote the work of the whole Council
- Aim for excellence and continuous improvement
- Be open, honest and fair
- Be a caring employer with high expectations of our Staff

The Council's Values Statement is attached at Appendix 1

1 HONESTY, INTEGRITY, IMPARTIALITY AND OBJECTIVITY

- 1.1 Employees of the Council are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the Council and the public. An employee must perform their duties with honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity.
- 1.2 Where it is part of their duties, to provide advice to Councillors, the public and colleagues that advice must be professional, impartial and honest.
- 1.3 Employees will be expected to bring to the attention of their line manager, Head of Service or the Chief Executive as appropriate any breach of this code or the Council's procedures without fear of recrimination.
- 1.4 An employee must not discriminate unlawfully against any person.
- 1.5 Employees should ensure that policies relating to equality issues as agreed by the authority are complied with in addition to the requirements of the law. All members of the community including customers, Councillors and colleagues have a right to be treated with fairness and equity.
- 1.6 Employees involved in appointments should ensure that these are made on the basis of merit. It would be unlawful for an employee to make an appointment which was based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the post.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY

- 2.1 All employees should be aware that they are accountable to the Council as employer for their actions in their employment. The Council has adopted employment policies to manage situations where an employee's actions are called into question.

3. RESPECT FOR OTHERS

- 3.1 An employee must treat
 - our customers and all members of the community;
 - members of the Council
 - colleagues
 - members and employees of partner organisationswith respect and courtesy.

4. **STEWARDSHIP**

- 4.1 Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to the Council and managed or handled by them in a responsible and lawful manner.
- 4.2 Officers should note that the Council's time, property, public funds and facilities, including stationery, tools, IT equipment, data/information, photocopiers, typewriters, vehicles, offices, car parks may only be used for official Council business unless permission for their private use, where appropriate is obtained from their Head of Service. The overriding consideration should be that of common sense, so that the situation can never arise whereby suspicion is aroused that an individual has taken advantage of their position as an employee of the Council for personal benefit.
- 4.3 Under no circumstances should Council contracts be used for personal advantage or purchases, and no employee should receive any discount or advantage in obtaining goods or services as a result of their employment with the Council.
- 4.4 The intellectual property in any design, document, invention or any other matter created in the course of an employee's employment is the property of the Council and no employee may claim copyright, patents or other intellectual property rights in respect of them without the express written consent of the Chief Executive.

5. **PERSONAL INTERESTS**

- 5.1 It is important that the Council acts fairly and objectively in making decisions and that there can be no reasonable suspicion that actions have been taken to favour employees, their relatives or friends. This part of the Code is designed to protect the Council and its employees from any such suspicion.
- 5.2 An employee has a personal interest in a matter for the purpose of this Code where a decision on the matter by the Council would be regarded by a reasonable person as affecting either the employee or a relative or friend of the employee to a materially greater extent than it would affect other inhabitants of the Borough.
- 5.3 An employee must not in their official or personal capacity allow their personal interests to conflict with their role as an employee of the Council.
- 5.4 An employee must not use their employment improperly to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.
- 5.5 Where an employee has a personal interest in any matter, which is for consideration or determination by the Council, they should inform their Head of Service and declare the interest to the Council's Monitoring Officer who will record the interest in a register kept for that purpose.
- 5.6 The Register of Officer's Interests will be confidential and will not be open for

public inspection but the entries may be revealed in the event of a complaint or enquiry concerning the particular matter.

- 5.7 Where an employee has a personal interest in a matter, which is for consideration or determination by the Council, they must take no part in the processing, consideration or determination of the matter and must not seek to influence, in any way, any person involved in the processing, consideration or determination of the matter.
- 5.8 When an employee has a relationship of a business or private nature with a contractor who has, or is bidding, for business with the Council the employee should declare that relationship to their Head of Service and the Monitoring Officer. This applies even if the relationship would not amount to a personal interest. The Monitoring Officer will record the declaration in the Register of Officer's Interests. Where such a relationship exists the employee should take no part in the awarding, administration or supervision of a contract involving the contractor.

6. **HOSPITALITY**

- 6.1 Employees should only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the Council in the community. Offers to attend purely social, sporting, or any other functions should be accepted only where the officer is attending as a representative of the Council, in circumstances where the nature of the event would give rise to an expectation that the Council would be represented.
- 6.2 Where the person offering the hospitality has a current matter with the Council for consideration or determination or where they are a contractor who might be expected to compete for Council business the presumption should be against accepting offers of hospitality.
- 6.3 Hospitality offered during attendance at conferences and courses may be accepted where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal and where the employee is satisfied that no suspicion could arise that advantage was being sought in any current or future procurement or other decisions.

- 6.4 Employees should seek authorisation from their Head of Service before accepting offers of hospitality. All hospitality should be reported to the Monitoring Officer who will record it in a register kept for that purpose. The Officer's Hospitality Register will not be confidential and will be available for public inspection.
- 6.5 When hospitality has to be declined those making the offer should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operating within the authority.
- 6.6 Employees must not accept personal gifts in the course of or arising out of their employment. This does not apply to items of token value such as pens, diaries, calendars, etc; where these are offered with no expectation of advantage.
- 6.7 Employees should be aware that corruption is a serious criminal offence and will be considered an act of gross misconduct. It is corruption for an employee to receive or to 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.

7. **OUTSIDE COMMITMENTS**

- 7.1 Officers above Scale 6 are expected to devote their whole-time service to the work of the Council and shall not engage in any other business or take up any other additional appointment without the express consent of the Chief Executive.
- 7.2 Employees should not undertake outside work if their official duties overlap in some way with their proposed work, if it causes a conflict of interest, or if it makes use of material to which the employee has access by virtue of his or her position (for example, an architect or a planner who draws up plans within his or her own authority for an applicant for planning consent). It is irrelevant whether or not the work is paid.
- 7.3 Employees' off-duty hours are their personal concern, but they should not subordinate their duty to their private interests or put themselves in a position where their duty and private interests conflict. The Council will not preclude employees from undertaking additional employment but any such employment must not, in the view of the authority, conflict or be detrimental to the Council's interests, or in any way weaken public confidence in the Council. Express written permission should be sought before taking up additional employment. If in doubt, employees should discuss their particular case with their Head of Service, who may seek clarification from the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer.

- 7.4 Employees should declare to their Head of Service membership of any organisation where activities might cause conflict between the officers obligations as a member of that Organisation and their employment with the Council.
- 7.5 Employees conduct outside work is not generally a concern for the Council unless their conduct is such that it affects their ability to do their job effectively or it brings the Council into disrepute. In such cases an employee's conduct may be dealt with as a disciplinary matter

8. **POLITICAL RESTRICTION**

- 8.1 Certain posts are designated as "politically restricted" under the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. These posts are those that are paid at spinal column point 44 and above, and those paid below that which give advice to the Council or its committees or the Cabinet on a regular basis, and those who speak to the media on behalf of the Council.
- 8.2 Employees in politically restricted posts are prohibited by law from standing for election to Parliament, National Assemblies or any Local Authority other than a parish council. They are also prohibited from speaking to the public or a section of the public or publishing or causing to be published anything with the apparent intention of affecting the support for a political party.
- 8.3 If an employee has any doubt whether or not their post is politically restricted they should consult the Human Resources Service.

9. **REPORTING PROCEDURES**

- 9.1 The Council will not and other employees must not treat an employee of the Council less favourably because that employee has done, intends to do, or is suspected of doing anything to report misconduct or malpractice under the Council's procedures or in accordance with the law.

10. **OPENNESS**

- 10.1 The law requires that certain types of information must be available to members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. Employees must be aware of which information in the Council's possession is classed as confidential and which is not and act accordingly. If there is doubt about whether information can be released, the employee should consult his or her Head of Service or the Monitoring Officer.
- 10.2 Employees must not seek to prevent any person gaining access to information where they were entitled to it by law.
- 10.3 Employees should not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it onto others who might use it in such a way.

10.4 Employees, other than Directors or Heads of Service should not speak to the press or representatives of other media without the express permission of their Head of Service. Requests for information or comment from the media should be referred to the employee's Head of Service, a Strategic Director, the Chief Executive or the Press and Public Relations Team.

11. **APPOINTMENT OF STAFF**

11.1 An employee must not be involved in the appointment or any decision relating to the discipline, promotion, pay or conditions of another employee or prospective employee if that person is a relative or friend.

11 **DUTY OF TRUST**

11.1 Employees of the Council must at all times act in accordance with the trust that the public are entitled to place in them.

12 **RELATIVES**

12.1 For the purpose of this Code "relative" means a member of the employees immediate or extended family and includes all of the following:-

- Spouse
- Partner (a member of a couple who live together)
- Parent
- Parent-in-law
- Son
- Daughter
- Step-son
- Step-daughter
- Child of a partner
- Brother
- Sister
- Grandparent
- Grandchild
- Uncle/Aunt
- Nephew/Niece
- The Spouse or Partner of any of the preceding persons