

Part 4C

Code of Conduct for Employees

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1. General principles

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees who work for local government. The role of such employees is to serve their employing authority in providing advice, implementing its policies, and delivering services to the local community. In performing their duties, they must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity.

2. Accountability

Local government employees work for their employing authority and serve the whole of that authority. They are accountable to and owe a duty to that authority. 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.

3. Political neutrality

Local government employees, whether or not politically restricted, must follow every lawfully expressed policy of the authority and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work. Where employees are politically restricted (by reason of the post they hold, the nature of the work they do, or the salary they are paid), they must comply with any statutory restrictions on their political activities.

4. Relations with councillors, the public and other employees

Mutual respect between employees and councillors is essential to good local government and working relationships should be kept on a professional basis. Employees should deal with the public, councillors and other employees sympathetically, efficiently, and without bias.

5. Equality

Local government employees must comply with policies relating to equality issues, as agreed by the authority, in addition to the requirements of the law.

6. Stewardship

Local government employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner, and must not use property, vehicles or other facilities of the authority for personal use unless authorised to do so.

7. Personal interests

Whilst employees' private lives are their own concern, they must not allow their private interests to conflict with their public duty. They must not misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their employment to further their private interests, or the interests of others. In particular, they must comply with:

- (a) any rules of their authority on the registration and declaration by employees of financial and non – financial interests; and
- (b) any rules of their authority on the declaration by employees of hospitality or gifts offered to or received by them, from any person or organisation doing or seeking to do business, or otherwise benefiting or seeking to benefit from a relationship with the authority. Employees must not accept benefits from a third party unless authorised to do so by their authority.

8. Whistleblowing

In the event that an employee becomes aware of activities which that employee believes to be illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent with this code, the employee should report the matter, acting in accordance with the employee's rights under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, and with the authority's confidential reporting code, or any other procedure designed for this purpose.

9. Treatment of information

Openness in the dissemination of information and decision making should be the norm in local government. However, certain information may be confidential or sensitive and therefore not appropriate for a wide audience. 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 councillor, employee or other person who is entitled to receive it or needs to have access to it for the proper discharge of their functions. Nothing in this Code can be taken as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to keep certain information confidential, or to divulge certain information.

10. Appointment of staff

Local government employees involved in the recruitment and appointment of staff must ensure that appointments are made on the basis of merit. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, such employees must not be involved in any appointment, or any other decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay and conditions for any other employee, or prospective employee, to whom they are related, or with whom they have a close personal relationship outside work.

11. Investigations

The Monitoring Officer and the Corporate Assurance Manager and Transformation Lead will investigate employees' reports made under the whistleblowing provisions of this Code. Employees must comply with requests that the Monitoring Officer and the Corporate Assurance Manager and Transformation Lead may make in connection with such investigations.