

Part 5.3 Local Code of Conduct for Employees

STATUS: This Code is binding on all Council employees other than those based in Schools whose employment terms are determined by Governing bodies. Any breach of the Code and the standards it sets will result in disciplinary action as could be an accessory to such a breach. The Authority requires that all employees operate within the law, as unlawful or criminal behaviour, even away from work, will lead to action against you. A breach of some rules can be so serious as to be deemed to be gross misconduct. This will entitle the Authority to dismiss you for a first offence without notice under the Authority's Disciplinary Procedure.

CONTACT: It is your responsibility to read this Code and work in accordance with it. If you are unsure about any aspect, check it with your line manager or Human Resources.

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CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Code of Conduct is incorporated into your contract of employment. It sets out the responsibilities and standards Slough Borough Council (the Authority) expects of you and the values it expects all staff to uphold. In carrying out your duties you are expected

To promote:

- The highest standards in public life
- Harmonious working relationships
- The Council's values and priorities

2. Principles

- 2.1 This code meets the recommendations of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life. The seven principles for those working in Slough Borough Council to observe are:

- **Selflessness** – you should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity** – you must not place yourself under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence you in your work. You should not take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for yourself, your family or your friends. You must declare any interests and relationships and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Objectivity** – you must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit using the best evidence and without discrimination.
- **Accountability** – you are accountable to the public for your decisions and actions and must submit yourself to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness** – you should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty** – you should be truthful.
- **Leadership** - you should promote and support these principles by leadership and by example and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

2.2 Whilst working for the Authority

You must:

- Comply with the Authority's constitution, service requirements, policies, standards, relevant legislation and professional standards which apply to your role.
- Comply with the procurement rules and financial regulations on the award of contracts and orders.
- Declare to your Director any potential or actual conflicts of interest or relationships that may impact on your work or that of the Authority.
- Report any concerns or breaches of this Code to your manager or in accordance with the Authority's whistleblowing policy.
- Ask your manager if you are unsure of what is required of you.

3. Breach of this Code

- 3.1 Breaches of this Code (inside or outside of work) will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action. Serious breaches of the Code may be considered gross misconduct and result in dismissal without notice.

4. Political Neutrality

4.1 When working for the Authority

You must:

- Remain politically neutral and objective in your work role.
- Not allow your personal or political opinions to interfere with your work.

5. Working with Elected Members

- 5.1 You serve the Authority as a whole and not just Members of the ruling political group.

You must:

- Work for all Members and give them appropriate and impartial advice;
- Deal with Members with respect and in a fair and even handed manner.
- Ensure that working relationships are kept on a professional basis.

6. Politically Restricted Posts

- 6.1 To ensure political impartiality, certain posts are by law politically restricted. This means that if you hold such a post:

You must not:

- Stand as a candidate for election to a local authority, Parliament or the European Parliament.
- Hold office in a political party.
- Canvass at any election for a political party or candidate.
- Speak or write publicly on politically controversial issues or demonstrate support for a political party or candidate.

6.2 Human Resources holds a list of the posts that are politically restricted. This includes posts where employees regularly advise Committees or Sub-Committees; and where employees regularly deal with the media on behalf of the Authority.

7. Working Relationships

7.1 You must demonstrate your commitment to diversity and equality in carrying out the full requirements of your role and behave at all times with respect, courtesy and in a reasonable manner.

- **Elected Members** – In addition to this Code there is a Local Code Governing Relations Between Elected Members and Council Employees that governs your working relationship with Elected Members
- **Local community and service users** – You must remember your responsibility to the community that you serve and ensure courteous, efficient, impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community in accordance with the Authority's policies.
- **Work Colleagues** – your relationship with your work colleagues must be professional, supportive, cooperative and respectful. You should not have day to day managerial responsibility or decision making responsibility relating to pay, discipline, and promotion for someone to whom you are related or with whom you have a close personal relationship. You must comply with the Authority's human resources policies and procedures.
- **Contractors and suppliers and other partners in service provision** – all your relationships of a business or private nature with external or potential contractors/suppliers/partners must be made known in writing to your Director and you must comply with the Authority's procedure for declaring interests. Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against tenders and no special favour should be shown in the tendering process to businesses run by friends or relatives. No part of the local community should be discriminated against.
- **Candidates for jobs** – whether for temporary, fixed term or permanent roles candidates must be appointed on merit, You should not be involved in the recruitment, selection, promotion or appointment of a spouse, partner, close family member i.e. mother, father, sibling, offspring or other person with whom there is a close personal relationship.

- **Dealing with the media** – only authorised officers may speak, write or give interviews to the media on behalf of the Authority. Otherwise all media requests should be referred to the Communications Office. This does not apply to an employee acting as a spokesperson for one of the Authority's recognised trades unions in the pursuit of legitimate industrial relations activities

8. Duty to Declare Interests (pecuniary and non-pecuniary)

8.1 You are responsible for declaring in writing to your Director any interest (financial or non-financial) relating to yourself, a family member or friend which conflicts or appears to conflict with the Authority's interests and the requirement for you to conduct yourself with integrity, impartiality and honesty. This includes interests, relationships and associations related to:

- The award of contracts
- The supervision of contracts
- The recruitment, promotion and management of personnel
- The provision of services to members of the community
- The awarding of grants to any voluntary organisation with which you are connected
- Access to confidential information
- The sponsorship of community organisations or events

8.2 You must declare membership of any organisation or pressure group which may seek to influence the policies of the Council.

8.3 You must declare membership of any organisation whose membership is not open to the public and that has a commitment of allegiance or whose rules or membership or conduct are secret. This includes the freemasons.

8.4 Your actions during your off duty hours can impact on your employment with the Authority. Subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, you must declare any criminal charges, criminal prosecutions and sentences including cautions

8.5 You must declare if a family member, partner or close friend becomes a Councillor.

8.6 Employees fall into two categories in relation to declarations:

- **Category A staff** – those staff in a position to influence: the selection of contractors/consultants; the granting of planning and licence consents; negotiations affecting land and property; and the disclosure of confidential information concerning commercial dealings and third parties. These staff must complete an annual return to be given to their Director and included in the confidential register maintained by the Monitoring Officer.
- **Category B staff** – all other staff who may have a conflict of interest are required to make a written declaration to their Director who will maintain a confidential departmental register.

9. Outside Work (paid, unpaid or voluntary)

9.1 You are not prohibited from undertaking outside work whether paid or unpaid providing that, in the Authority's view, this does not conflict with or be to the detriment of your role with the Authority or conflict with the Authority's interest.

9.2 You must obtain written consent from your Director in advance, if seeking to undertake outside work.

9.3 Where outside work has been authorised, you must not use the Authority's facilities (including telephone, photocopies, computers/software, accommodation) for such work unless authorised to do so.

9.4 Examples of outside work include, but are not limited to:

- Being a director, agent or professional advisor to a company.
- Consultancy work.
- Lecturing.
- Being a school governor, special constable or magistrate.
- Volunteer with a charity/voluntary organisation.
- Driving a mini cab.

10. Gifts and hospitality

10.1 As a Council Officer it is important that you treat any offer of gifts or hospitality with great care as acceptance may call into question your integrity. Employees should only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the Authority in the community.

You must:

- Make sure that the acceptance of any modest gifts or hospitality is authorised by your Director in accordance with the Authority's procedures.
- Report in writing to your Director all offers of gifts or hospitality even if not accepted by you

You must not:

- Accept personal gifts (monetary or otherwise), loans, fees, rewards, favours, invitations to social, sporting or other events or any advantage from potential or existing contractors, outside suppliers, planning applicants or their agents, grant applicants, Councillors or service users. All such officer must be reported in writing to your Director in accordance with the Authority's procedures.

- Accept gifts or favours from vulnerable service users to whom you may provide care or support. Offers of such gifts or favours from their relatives and friends must also be refused. You must refer to the Social Services procedure regarding such gifts.
- 10.2 Where the refusal of an unsolicited gift may cause offence, the gift may be donated to the Mayor's official charity and the donor informed in writing.
- 10.3 The offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward for doing or not doing anything or showing favour or disfavour to any person in your official capacity is to act corruptly and is a serious criminal offence.

11. Handling Authority Money

- 11.1 The Authority is a publically funded organisation. When dealing with the Authority's funds you must be familiar with Procurement Rules, Financial Regulations, the Financial Scheme of Delegations and any other relevant procedures.

You must:

- Use Authority funds in a responsible, accountable and lawful way.
- Comply with Financial Regulations and any other relevant procedures.
- Take legal and financial advice where appropriate.
- Seek value for money.
- Report any suspected financial irregularity, corruption or fraud to your manager or via the whistleblowing procedure.

12. Intellectual Property

- 12.1 The Authority retains the intellectual property rights in all work undertaken by its employees. Research, reports, designs, drawings, software development or similar work remain the property of the Authority and should not be passed onto a third party without the express consent of the Authority in writing.

13. Protecting Confidential Information

- 13.1 The Authority supports open government. The law requires that certain types of information are available to Elected Members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. Guidance is given in the Constitution on the disclosure of information including the Access to Information Rules and the Local Code Governing Relations between Elected Members and Council Employees.
- 13.2 Unless the individual/organisation gives informed consent to its release, certain information must be kept confidential.

This includes:

- Personal information relating to service users or third parties.
- Personal information relating to employees or candidates for employment.
- Financial or other information which could prejudice the Authority's interest, if revealed.
- Information provided by contractors relating to their bids or tenders for a contract. Such information is commercial in confidence both during and for a time after the tender process.

13.3 Maintaining confidentiality of sensitive information is essential. Any such breach could lead to the Authority being fined by the Information Commissioner.

You must:

- Comply with the Authority's policies and procedures on information security.
- Report any suspected breach of information security.

You must not:

- Use any information obtained in the course of your employment for your personal gain.
- Pass on any such information to third parties.
- Access or attempt to access information for which you have no access authorisation.

13.4 All requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 must be forwarded to your Director.

14. Working Safely

14.1 The Authority meets its statutory obligations by taking all reasonable and practicable steps to provide a safe and healthy working environment and to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to protect the health and safety of its service users.

14.2 All employees are expected to know and to follow the appropriate health and safety requirements in their work area.

14.3 Managers are responsible for arranging appropriate health and safety training for employees.

14.4 Any health and safety problems must be reported immediately to the manager responsible for the area concerned.

15. Use of Facilities

15.1 The facilities and equipment provided as part of your work belong to the Authority.

You must:

- Comply with health and safety regulations and use personal protective equipment as required.
- Take care of Authority property and equipment; keeping it secure; and reporting any breakages or breaches in security.
- Use equipment, vehicles and facilities including stationery, printing, photocopying, and computers for authorised purposes only.

16. Reporting Concerns

16.1 The Authority expects its employees to act in the public interest and to report impropriety, breach of procedure or failure in the manner in which services are being provided.

You must:

- Report any activity which you believe is illegal, improper, unethical, dangerous or a breach of this Code.
- Your report should be to your line manager or if more appropriate to a more senior manager or in accordance with the Authority's whistleblowing policy.

16.2 The whistleblowing policy gives protection to employees who raise concerns that are in the public interest.

16.3 Concerns about your own employment should be raised with your manager or if more appropriate to a more senior manager or in accordance with the Authority's grievance policy.