

## **Part 5.3 Local Code of Conduct for Officers**

**STATUS:** This Code applies to everyone who is employed directly or works for Slough Borough Council (the Council), with the exception of staff employed in schools who are subject to the policies and procedures of the individual school. This includes all those employed directly on a permanent, temporary or casual basis and those employed indirectly, including agency workers and consultants if able to make decisions on behalf of the Council. The Code also applies to those who are external secondees and those who are authorised under a delegation of function.

### **Contents**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Principles**
- 3. Breach of the Code**
- 4. Political Neutrality**
- 5. Working with Elected Members**
- 6. Politically restricted posts**
- 7. Working Relationships**
  - (a) Elected Members**
  - (b) Local community and service users**
  - (c) Work Colleagues**
  - (d) Contractors and suppliers and other partners in service provision**
  - (e) Candidates for jobs**
  - (f) Dealing with the media**
- 8. Use of social media**
- 9. Duty to Declare Interests**
- 10. Outside Work**
- 11. Gifts and Hospitality**
- 12. Handling Council Money**
- 13. Intellectual Property**
- 14. Protecting Confidential Information**
- 15. Working safely**
- 16. Standards of behaviour, including appearance**
- 17. Use of Facilities**
- 18. Reporting Concerns**

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR OFFICERS**

### **1. Introduction**

This Code of Conduct forms part of your terms of employment/assignment. It sets out the responsibilities and standards the Council expects of you and the values it expects all officers to uphold. In carrying out your duties you are expected to:

- Promote the highest standards in public life, as set out under the Principles section below;
- Respect your colleagues, elected members and the public;
- Act in a professional manner and in compliance with the principles of the Equality Act 2010;
- Deliver the best possible and efficient service to residents, taxpayers and service users in accordance with the Council's values and priorities.

This includes:

- How you behave (or are perceived to behave) both inside and outside of work, particularly considering how your actions or behaviour will be considered by the residents of Slough.
- How you use public money and other resources.
- Acting with honesty, impartiality and objectivity.
- How you work with the Council's suppliers and contractors to ensure there is no perception of improper conduct including corruption
- Not allowing personal interests to affect your work and properly declaring interests.
- Ensuring that you, your family or your friends, do not gain improper financial or other benefits from the decisions or actions you take whilst working for the Council.
- Always declaring any interests you have outside work that relate to your work for the Council and any actual or potential conflicts of interest.
- Complying with the Council's constitution, policies and procedures and your own regulatory and professional standards as they apply to your role.
- Reporting any concerns or breaches of this Code or other Council's policies, unlawful behaviour or actions or other information that could lead to serious harm, whether by yourself or by others, to your manager or in accordance with the Council's whistleblowing policy. Examples of other information includes individuals misusing their position, suspicions that a colleague is under the influence of alcohol or drugs at work, suspicions that conduct or behaviour could harm a child or vulnerable adult or suspected breach of health and safety requirements. If you are unsure whether to report something or what is expected of you, you should raise this with your manager, director, human resources or the Monitoring Officer.

In this Code, Director includes the Chief Executive, Executive Director and Director and Senior Officer including Heads of Service and Director.

## 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 Council

You must:

- Comply with the Council'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 Council.
- Report any concerns or breaches of this Code to your manager or in accordance with the Council'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 will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action or termination of your assignment.

## **4. Political Neutrality**

- 4.1 As an officer you work for the Council as a whole. You must not allow your personal political opinions to interfere with providing balanced professional advice. You should refrain from making political comments in public or on social media if to do so could bring the Council into disrepute or this will impact negatively on your ability to undertake your role.
- 4.2 If you are in a politically restricted role, there are additional restrictions on the political activities you can participate in in your private life, as set out in Section 6 below. Political assistants are in politically restricted roles but have specific terms and conditions which permit them to work with a single political group. Political assistants remain bound by this Code and should seek advice if they are unsure about the extent of their role.
- 4.3 There are specific rules in relation to attending a political group meeting. These are set out in the Member Officer Relations Protocol.
- 4.4 No officer can stand for office as an elected member of Slough Borough Council.

## **5. Working with Elected Members**

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

You must:

- Provide advice based on your professional expertise and in an impartial manner.
- Deal with all 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:

- Announce or cause, authorise or permit anyone else to announce that you are, or intend to be, a candidate for election as a member of the House of Commons, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly or a local Council. Council
- Act as an election agent or sub-agent for a candidate for election.
- Hold office in a political party or be a member of any committee or sub-committee of such a party or branch of a party if the duties would be likely to require you to participate in the general management of the party or the branch or act on behalf of the party or branch in dealings with persons other than members of the party or members of another political party associated with the party.
- Canvass at any election for a political party or candidate.

- Speak to the public or a section of the public with the apparent intention of affecting public support for a political party.
- Publish any written or artistic work of which you are the author or one of the authors or have acted in an editorial capacity or cause, authorise or permit any other person to publish such a work or collection, if the work appears to be intended to affect public support for a political party. This restriction only applies to publication to the public at large or a section of the public and does not preclude the display of a poster or other document on property occupied by you as your dwelling or on a vehicle or article used by you (excludes political assistants)

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 Council. The above restrictions are incorporated into the terms of appointment or conditions of employment by law, regardless of whether they are referred to in the written terms and conditions. These will apply at all times while the individual holds the relevant post.

6.3 Political assistants have additional terms and conditions and should seek advice on these as required.

6.4 Any officer in a politically restricted role should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer if they are unsure whether an intended activity is permitted.

## 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** – you should comply with the Member Officer Relations Protocol when working with Elected Members.

**Local community and service users** – you should ensure courteous, efficient, impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community in accordance with the Council’s policies. You should avoid developing inappropriate personal relationships with residents, clients or service users and ensure you act in the best interests of vulnerable adults and children. At no time should an officer’s behaviour or actions damage public confidence in the Council or cast doubt on their honesty or integrity. Information acquired through work must not be misused or improperly disclosed. An officer must not abuse their position or seek to gain a personal advantage from use of their position.

- **Work Colleagues** – your relationship with your work colleagues must be professional, supportive, cooperative and respectful. You must comply with the Council’s human resources policies and procedures. Officers must not use their position with the Council for their own advantage. You must tell your manager or the Monitoring Officer about any personal relationship with a colleague that may impact or be perceived to have an impact on your work. 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. Complaints or allegations about the performance of other employees should be raised with your manager or an appropriate senior officer in accordance with Council procedures.

- **With Managers** – all officers have a joint responsibility to ensure good working relationships. Officers should carry out all reasonable and lawful instructions from their manager to the best of their abilities. The manager is also expected to provide feedback on performance, give advice on how improvements can be made, define what is expected from an officer and deal with concerns about work performance. Even outside formal procedures, managers are expected to provide assistance and support to officers in the performance of their duties.
- **Contractors and suppliers and other partners in service provision** – all your personal or business relationships with external or potential contractors/suppliers/partners outside your Council role must be made known in writing to your Director and you must comply with the Council'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 section of the local community should be discriminated against or favoured. Careful records should be kept of all meetings, recording the purpose and outcome of meetings. Guidance on the acceptance of hospitality and gifts should be carefully observed. If at any time an officer considers that a contractor or potential contractor is trying to unduly or improperly influence the consideration of a tender then a Senior Officer must be informed immediately.
- **Candidates for jobs** – all 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 or other person with whom there is a close personal relationship. You should not canvass for a job on behalf of a friend or family member. If a candidate is known to you other than as a work colleague, you should disclose this and seek advice on how to proceed.
- **Dealing with the media** – only authorised officers may speak, write or give interviews to the media on behalf of the Council. Media requests should be referred to the Communications Office. This does not apply to an officer acting as a spokesperson for one of the Council's recognised trades unions in the pursuit of legitimate industrial relations activities. If an officer wishes to write any articles or give interviews relating to the work of the Council or which identify the author or speaker as an officer of the Council prior permission must be obtained from their Director. If an officer wishes to speak or write in a personal capacity on a matter unconnected with the Council, they should consider whether the content of such communication could bring the Council into disrepute or impact negatively on their ability to conduct their role, including in relation to effective working relationships.

## **8. Use of social media**

8.1 The communications and social media tools that the Council provides are intended for the Council's business only.

8.2 Information that you publish, share or respond to on social media (whether at home or at work) can be seen to represent the Council or affect the Council's reputation. You should ensure that information you publish, share or respond to outside of work, or which is published through accounts you are responsible for, does not:

- Disclose confidential or personal information obtained through your work with the Council without explicit consent;
- Publish information that is the Council's property;
- Provide misleading information about the work you do for the Council;
- Make negative comments about the Council, colleagues, residents or service users or anyone else linked to the Council;
- Make offensive, defamatory or discriminatory remarks;
- Display offensive photographs or images;
- Express political views which could bring the Council into disrepute or impact negatively on your ability to work for the Council, including with its elected members;
- Express views that are contrary to the Council's policies, with the exception of responding to consultation by the Council on its activities;
- Use social media to bully or harass colleagues or anyone else linked to the Council;
- Publish anything else that may adversely affect the Council's reputation.

## **9 Duty to Declare Interests (pecuniary and non-pecuniary)**

- 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 Council's interests and the requirement for you to conduct yourself with integrity, impartiality and honesty.

9.1 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

9.2 You must not gain a financial benefit from your role over and above your proper remuneration. Section 117 of the Local Government Act 1972 prevents

the acceptance of any fee or reward whatsoever other than proper remuneration. Non-compliance is a criminal offence.

- 9.3 You must declare membership of any organisation or pressure group which may seek to influence the policies of the Council.
- 9.4 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.
- 9.5 Your actions during your off duty hours can impact on your employment with the Council. Subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, you must declare any criminal charges, criminal prosecutions and sentences including cautions.
- 9.6 You must declare if a family member, partner or close friend becomes a Councillor.
- 9.7 The relevant Director will maintain a departmental register of the above declarations.

## **10 Outside Work (paid, unpaid or voluntary)**

- 10.1 You are not prohibited from undertaking outside work whether paid or unpaid providing that, in the Council's view, this does not conflict with or be to the detriment of your role with the Council or conflict with the Council's interest.
- 10.2 You must obtain written consent from your Director in advance, if seeking to undertake outside work.
- 10.3 Where outside work has been authorised, you must not use the Council's facilities (including telephone, photocopies, computers/software, accommodation) for such work unless authorised to do so.
- 10.4 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.

## **11 Gifts and hospitality**

- 11.1 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. Officers should only accept offers of hospitality when representing the Council and where registered with your Director.

You must:



- Make sure that the acceptance of any modest gifts or hospitality is registered with your Director in accordance with the Council's procedures. Modest means gifts such as pens, calendars, diaries, chocolates or flowers commensurate with the occasion and no more than is reasonable.
- 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.. All such offers must be reported in writing to your Director in accordance with the Council'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.

- 11.2 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.
- 11.3 The offering, giving, promising, 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 under s.1 and 2 of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 11.4 Care should be taken before accepting places on free conferences and courses, particularly when these may involve the attendance of business and bodies who are interested in providing services to local authorities.

## **12 Handling Council Money**

- 12.1 The Council is a publicly funded organisation. When dealing with the Council's funds you must be familiar with Contract Procedure Rules, Financial Procedure Rules, Anti-Money Laundering procedures and any other relevant procedures.

You must:

- Use Council funds in a responsible, accountable and lawful way.
- Comply with Financial Procedure Rules 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.

## **13 Intellectual Property**

- 13.1 The Council 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 Council and should not be passed onto a third party without the express consent of the Council in writing.

## **14. Protecting Confidential Information**

- 14.1 The Council 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 Member Officer Relations Protocol.
- 14.2 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 Council'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.
- 14.3 Maintaining confidentiality of sensitive information is essential. Any such breach could lead to the Council being fined by the Information Commissioner.

You must:

- Comply with the Council'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.

14.4 All requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and data protection legislation must be managed in accordance with internal procedures and advice sought on compliance as appropriate.

## **15. Working Safely**

15.1 The Council 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.

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

15.3 Managers are responsible for arranging appropriate health and safety training for officers.

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

15.5 You have a duty to help prevent accidents and injuries at work by being aware of the policies that apply to your work and complying with them at all times. You must:

- Comply with all instructions relating to health and safety and security procedures;
- Use the protective clothing and equipment that the Council supplies to you;
- Follow the health and safety codes of practice and policies which are relevant to your work;
- Comply with hygiene requirements;
- At the earliest opportunity, report any hazards, defects, accidents or incidents, including “near misses”, that you become aware of to your manager or supervisor;
- Not interfere with, or misuse anything provided for health, safety or welfare;
- Avoid risk of injury or danger to yourself or others;
- Leave any Council building as soon as the fire alarm sounds and follow instructions of the fire wardens and the person managing the incident;
- Inform the Council of any other work that you do which, when added to your Council working hours, would take your total working hours above 48 hours per week;
- Inform the Council of any medical condition you have which would be adversely affected by the work that you are employed to do;
- Not smoke in any council premises or vehicles.
- Not consume drugs (unless for medical reasons) or alcohol at work and not be under the influence of these in a way which could impact your role. Different roles may require more restrictive rules in relation to consumption of alcohol and drugs.

## **16 Standards of behaviour and appearance**

16.1 We have standards of behaviour which we expect from you. They make the Council a good place to work and ensure that colleagues, residents and service users feel welcomed and valued. This includes complying with the Council's commitments to equality.

16.2 We will not tolerate unfair, offensive or unlawful discriminatory behaviour carried out by, or against, any member of staff. Discriminatory, unacceptable or offensive behaviour can take many different forms. Remember that your colleagues and our residents may have different standards from you and may be offended or feel harassed by behaviour that you think is acceptable.

16.3 If you feel you have been subject to this sort of behaviour or have witnessed this by another officer, it may be appropriate for you to seek to resolve this informally by having a discussion and explaining how this made you feel. If this is not possible or appropriate, or you are dissatisfied with the response, you can speak to your manager or utilise the Council's grievance procedures.

16.4 How we look and dress at work has an impact on how people view the Council. We recognise that:

- Different types of dress are needed or appropriate for different types of work;
- Officers come from a diverse range of backgrounds, cultures and ages with different styles of dress;
- More casual clothing may be appropriate in certain circumstances or roles.

16.5 The Council expects all officers to:

- Have a high standard of appearance and personal hygiene
- Choose professional and appropriate clothing for the work they are doing
- Not wear any clothing, badges or other items with political or offensive messages
- Display a visible Council identification badge when working in a Council building, unless your manager has agreed that this is not necessary;
- If you have been issued with a uniform or protective clothing, wear this in accordance the instructions
- Return any issued protective clothing when you no longer need this or leave the Council's employment
- Only make alterations to protective clothing or uniform for religious or health reasons after obtaining agreement from your manager

## **17. Use of Facilities**

17.1 The facilities and equipment provided as part of your work belong to the Council.

You must:

- Comply with health and safety regulations and use personal protective equipment as required.
- Take care of Council 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.

## **18. Reporting Concerns**

18.1 The Council expects its officers 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 Council's whistleblowing policy.

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

18.3 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 Council's grievance policy.