



CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER
HUMAN RESOURCES
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

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1. Introduction

This Code of Conduct provides a framework for your behaviour, decisions and actions as a public official. It is not an exhaustive list of what you can and cannot do but aims to help employees to understand what is expected from them including the way in which Officers interact with elected Members and senior management.

The aim of this code is to tell you about the standards which are expected and to help you avoid any misunderstanding or criticism.

If at any time you are unsure about the ‘right thing’ to do then you can:

- Refer to your own local policies, procedures and guidance, the requirements that apply to your own job.
- Discuss the matter with your line manager
- Seek advice from Human resources, Internal Audit or Legal Services.

Some of our Services may issue local codes to cover specific service issues and where this is the case, the local codes will form part of your terms and conditions.

You should be aware of and abide by service specific Standards of Conduct or Regulations, especially when working with vulnerable adults and children.

It is important to note that breaches of some of the Standards within this Code may also be a breach of the Bribery Act and may result in a criminal offence.

Staffs that belong to professional associations are expected to apply the standards of their associations no less rigorously than those set out within this Code.

This Code of conduct applies to all employees and anyone engaged by the Council to carry out work at its behalf.

It is your responsibility as an employee to read this Code of Conduct and to work in accordance with it.

Non-compliance with this Code (or Service Code) may result in disciplinary action and may be treated as gross misconduct which may result in dismissal from the Council. Legal action may also be taken.

2. Core Principles

The following core principles underpin the concept of public service and apply to all employees of the Council regardless of the nature of the job they do.

SELFLESSNESS

Employees should take decisions solely in the terms of the public interest. They must not do so nor use their position in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

INTEGRITY

Employees should not place themselves under any financial or other obligations to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

OBJECTIVITY

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, employees must make decisions on merit.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Employees are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

OPENNESS

Employees should be as open as possible about all decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it.

HONESTY

Employees have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

LEADERSHIP

Employees should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

3.0 Gifts & Hospitality

It is not normally acceptable to accept a gift, reward or favour from others for work done in your official capacity. The acceptance of any gifts, reward or favour from people who are or may be dealing with the Council, may leave the Council and its employees could be open to criticism.

Any gift or hospitality offered to you must be under a value of £25; this value might be a notional amount and must still be in line with the standards of the code.

Any gift accepted (over the £25 limit) must be reported to your senior manager including the type and the reasons you are receiving the offer of a gift or hospitality.

Gifts of cash or cash equivalent (e.g. vouchers) cannot be accepted regardless of the value.

Managers and employees should be aware of any patterns that may emerge in the receipt of gifts and hospitality to ensure any cumulative values (both for gifts under £25 and over), do not give rise to any issues.

In declining hospitality please do so courteously and explain that the Council's rules do not allow you to accept.

You must refuse offers of hospitality where a suggestion of improper influence is possible. Employees must be sensitive to the timing of any decisions being made between the Council and third party.

You should only accept hospitality where it is on a scale appropriate to the circumstances, and where it is apparent that no cause could reasonably arise for adverse criticism about the acceptance of the hospitality.

Hospitality might be deemed as 'acceptable' when the invitation is corporate not personal but this should only be accepted in discussions with your manager.

Note:

It is a criminal offence to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing or not doing something or showing favour or disfavour to any person in their official capacity. If such an allegation is made it is for the employee to demonstrate that any alleged rewards have not been corruptly obtained or provided.

4.0 Use of Financial Resources

You must ensure that you use public funds entrusted to you:-

- in a responsible and lawful manner; and
- ensuring value for money for the local community; and
- avoiding the risk of legal challenge to the Council;

Employees must act in accordance with the Council's:-

- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations
- Procurement rules and
- All operating procedures

Employees should ensure that when committing Council money that:-

- There is an approved budget for such expenditure: and
- The expenditure is within the limits that they are personally authorised to spend

5.0 Use of Council Facilities

At work you have access to facilities which includes office equipment, computers, stores, transport etc. These facilities are provided for work and should not be used inappropriately nor wasted, damaged or lost.

Council facilities or property should not be used for private purposes unless it is appropriately authorised and limited for example copying of personal documents.

If you have to drive a Council owned vehicles as part of your job then it important that you make yourself aware of the Council's Driving at Work Policy.

Equipment belonging to the Council should not be used for party political purposes

If you are in doubt then seek advice from your Line Manager before using equipment/ facilities for personal use.

6.0 Knowledge and Information

The Council holds information and records of the public to enable it to carry out its function. You must handle this information, including personal and sensitive data, in accordance with Information Governance, Security and Sharing Policies. You must ensure that appropriate records are created, stored, accessed, shared and

disposed of securely in line with legal requirements, confidentiality rules and other Council standards.

Intellectual property means products of the mind, for example, inventions, designs, trademarks, writings, programs and drawings (referred to as 'inventions'). Ownership of all 'inventions' and the copyright of all written material created during work will belong to the Council.

This is a complex area; further guidance must always be sought from Legal Services in any particular case.

7.0 Political Neutrality

It is important to remember that as Council Employees you work in a political environment

In carrying out your work you must:

- Be politically neutral
- Be unbiased in the performance of your duties
- Respect the function and office of Members, regardless of the party they represent

As a Council Employee you serve the democratically elected Council as a whole (i.e. all Councillors). You must respect Councillor's rights and not allow any personal or political views to interfere with your working with Councillors.

Close relationships between employees and Councillors may be incompatible with high standards of public life and should be avoided. If this is unavoidable then it is important that you discuss any potential conflict with your senior manager.

Some roles are designated 'Politically Restricted Roles' under the Local Government and Housing Act. If this affects your role, you will be notified separately.

8.0 Working Outside the Council (Other Employment) and External Activities

You must get your manager's written permission before undertaking any other type of employment.

This is defined as any other paid work that an employee of the Council undertakes for another firm or for their own private business, outside of the contract of employment with the Council.

Any 'other employment' must not conflict with the interest of the Council. Your manager should discuss this with you

If you are given approval to carry out other private work or employment then:

- You must continue to fulfil your role and duties to the Council
- You should not conduct any private/additional work during working hours or on the Council premises nor use Council equipment.
- You should not undertake private work for any person, firm or company if it will involve the Council.
- Undertake private work for another employee responsible for supervising you or whom you supervise, or for an elected member of the Council.

Any Employee who has additional employment must make themselves aware of and comply with the Working Time Directive and Health & Safety regulations

Voluntary Work conducted by Council employees is treated differently and you should refer to the Volunteering Policy.

Employees who have any additional role (paid or voluntary) outside of their role with the Council must ensure it is declared on the appropriate form. This declaration should be made in a timely manner.

9.0 Honesty and Integrity

Employees must at all time act in accordance with the trust and confidence placed upon them as a public servant. This may be by the public as well as the Council as your Employer

Employees must use any public money or service users' money entrusted to or handled by them, in a responsible and lawful manner and not make personal use of the Council resources unless properly authorised to do so.

Never use your official position or authority to seek to improperly influence a decision or action or for your own personal gain. Always work in accordance with the Council's Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy

You must aim to avoid conflicts of interest between your private interest and your public duties and declare them in writing should they happen.

Never undermine the Council (or its partners) in its business or allow your standards of behaviour to fall below those expected of the community that the Council serves

If as an individual you have any direct or indirect interest in an organisation or company that is doing business with the Council, which you think conflicts with your job role, then you should inform your Manager.

Employees who during the course of attending a meeting believe they that may be in conflict with an item on the agenda should advise the Chair and leave the meeting for all or part of the meeting as appropriate.

Employees will have rights as citizens and service users, but you must behave in a way which gives no grounds for accusations of favouritism or unduly influencing the Council, members or colleagues.

As a Council employee you should avoid any conduct, which could give rise to suspicions of impropriety or acting inappropriately to benefit yourself, your family or your friends.

You must never abuse the position that you hold within the Council for example you must never use Council records/ systems to obtain information about yourself or a third party.

You should not use your position with the Council to obtain a discount for goods or services. However, you may purchase goods at discount terms under a scheme or arrangement which applies, for example, Working Rewards

If you are unsure if you have a conflict of interest between your work and your personal dealings with the Council then speak to your Manager straight away.

10. Respect and Working With Others

Employees must treat other people with respect and not discriminate unlawfully or unfairly against any person. They must treat Councillors and other co-opted members of the authority professionally.

You must treat colleagues, elected members and the public respectfully and with dignity.

You must never discriminate against, harass or victimise any person.

You should follow all reasonable instructions given by your manager or any person with the authority to give you instructions at work. You must respect their

role which does mean accepting that you may not always agree with their decisions

You must report to your manager anything that might impair your ability to do your job

You must follow Council approved policies and procedures.

Your manager will:

- Ensure that you understand what is required of you at work
- Fairly and objectively appraise your performance
- Provide you with training and development opportunities
- Provide a safe and secure working environment
- Recognise your need for work life balance.

Never act in a way that could bring the Council into disrepute – even if you are not on duty, for example use of social media and publishing of photographs that might compromise your own reputation as well as that of the Council.

You should present yourself for work free from any impairment due to drugs, alcohol and/or other substance

Identity/name badges should be worn at all times and should not be modified

As an employee of the Council you will be expected to maintain a smart appearance and to have a courteous and helpful manner. You should dress as is appropriate to your role.

Clothing/ Uniforms provided for work purposes must be worn when on duty and must not be modified. Uniforms should not be worn outside of work and when not on duty. Any uniform items which are no longer required should be returned to your Manager.

11.0 Reporting Breaches of the Code of Conduct and Whistleblowing

The Council is committed to the highest standards of public life and expect Council Employees to be exemplary in their conduct at work

The Council is committed to preventing malpractice, fraud & corruption

If you have any concerns that you would like to discuss further then you can report these to your manager or Head of Service/ Service Director

If you have concerns about fraud or other potential malpractice in the workplace then you can report these to the Council's Whistleblowing Officer on 01244 973 223 or by emailing: whistleblowing@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Version	Date Created	Owner	Date Approved by Staffing Committee
1.0	June 2017	HR Core	27th June 2017