

Code of Conduct

HR review Date: September 2020



**NORTH
NORFOLK**
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

1. Introduction

The Code of Conduct is designed to provide guidance about what is expected from employees in their daily work and in their dealings with [District Councillors \(referred to here as elected Members\)](#), colleagues and the public. The way employees carry out their duties must promote and maintain public confidence and trust in the work of the Council. Employees are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public and, where it is part of their duties, to provide appropriate and impartial advice to elected Members and fellow employees.

This code describes minimum standards that protect the integrity of both employees and the Council. This code applies to all employees.

Employees are expected to know and to follow the rules that apply to them. It is important that employees acquaint themselves with the policies and procedures that apply to them. If there is anything in this code that employees do not understand or require clarification on, they should speak to their line manager or HR.

Managers should ensure that employees reporting to them have access to the code.

Failure to comply with the code may result in disciplinary action, which could include dismissal.

Associated policies and procedures:-

[IT Security Policy](#)

[Disciplinary Procedure](#)

[Whistleblowing Policy](#)

[Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)

[Safeguarding Policy](#)

Drugs and alcohol at Work Policy

Capability Policy and Procedure

[Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

[Data Protection Policy and Guidance Notes](#)

2. In summary, what does the Council expect from its employees

- Commitment to delivering quality services
- Performance of the duties of their post diligently and to the best of their ability
- Understanding and application of the Council's rules, policies and procedures
- Attending work in a condition where they are able to carry out their duties effectively and safely
- Acting in accordance with the Council's competencies and values
- -Acting honestly
- Treating colleagues, elected Members and members of the public with dignity and respect
- Not allowing prejudice or personal bias influence their decisions in carrying out their work
- To attend work without being adversely affected by alcohol or other substances
- To obey lawful and reasonable instructions

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3. Equalities

North Norfolk District Council promotes equal opportunities and has a number of obligations under equality legislation. All employees are expected to adhere to this guide in line with these obligations.

Reasonable adjustments or supportive measures will be considered where appropriate to ensure equality of access and opportunity regardless of age, gender, maternity, pregnancy, gender reassignment, marriage, civil partnership, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief.

4. Standards of behaviour and personal conduct

Employees should treat colleagues, elected Members and members of the public with dignity and respect.

Employees should:

- Maintain conduct of the highest standard such that public confidence in their integrity is sustained
- Ensure their conduct/attitude is not discriminatory, offensive, persistently uncooperative, unhelpful, rude or harassing to others
- Ensure their behaviour and performance meets work place standards and competencies
- Ensure they understand and follow the Council's policy on equal opportunities

5. Alcohol/Drugs/Substance Misuse

The Council takes the health and well-being of employees seriously and wishes to minimize problems at work arising from the effects of alcohol and drugs (whether prescribed or illegal). Employees should make familiarise themselves with the Council's policy on **Drugs and Alcohol at Work**.

Employees are encouraged to seek appropriate advice in relation to alcohol, drugs and other substance abuse and may contact the HR team for advice in this area.

Where the behaviour or performance of employees falls below expected standards and/or presents a risk to colleagues, service users, members of the public or others due to alcohol, drugs or other substance misuse, this will be addressed under the **Disciplinary and/or Capability Procedure** or through such other measures as are appropriate in the circumstances (in consultation with HR and Unison, where applicable).

Employees have a duty to report any problems associated with their ability to drive, use equipment or perform other work related tasks and must not drive or use such equipment whilst their judgment and/or physical ability may be impaired by the use of alcohol, drugs, medicine or fatigue. Employees have a responsibility to inform their line manager if they are taking any medication which interferes with the safe performance of their role.

6. Health and Safety and Well Being

All employees have a personal and legal responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act for themselves, colleagues and visitors to the Council's buildings and premises.

7. Personal appearance

The Council does not have a formal dress code. It is expected that employees will dress appropriately according to the nature of the work they are doing and which does not offend colleagues, customers or service users. Employees who are required to wear an appropriate uniform or protective clothing to perform their duties will be provided with what is required and must wear this as instructed.

8. Smoking at Work

Employees are not allowed to smoke or vape in Council buildings. See the **Smoke Free Policy** for further details.

9. Outside Commitments/Work

Employees must not allow their private interests to come into conflict with their work. Employees must devote their whole time service to the work of the Council and may not engage in any other business or take up any other additional employment without the written permission of their Head of Service.

This does not preclude employees from undertaking additional work outside their working hours providing it does not impact on, distract them from or conflict with the Council work and is subject at all times to written permission being granted. Regardless of the post, all employees who undertake additional work (either paid or voluntary) must notify their line manager in order to ensure compliance with the Working Time Regulations 1998, (in relation to paid work).

Employees must also ensure that Council time and/or resources (e.g. time, equipment, information) are not utilized in connection with any private employment.

10. Disclosure of Information

Employees must not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass information on to others who might use it in such a way.

11. Confidentiality

The employee has an obligation to respect the confidentiality of information acquired in the course of their work and must not disclose information about employees, clients, elected Members, council finances, or any other council business either directly or by way of casual conversation. The employee must not use such information for their personal advantage or gain or pass it to others who may use it for their advantage or gain.

12. Data Protection

The Council is required by law to comply with the [General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\)](#)~~Data Protection Act 1998~~. An employee must ensure that personal information is processed lawfully and fairly. Personal information is information relating to a living individual who can be identified. It is an employee's responsibility to handle all personal information properly, no matter how it has been collected, recorded and used. An employee will not disclose personal information to others unless authorized to do so. Employees should familiarise themselves with the Council's **Data Protection Policy** and training is available on the e-learning portal.

13. Political Neutrality

As an employee of the Council, the employee's personal political opinions should not interfere with their work or bring the Council into disrepute. Certain posts within the Council are politically restricted under the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Politically restricted post-holders are subject to prescribed restrictions on their political activity. If this applies to the post holder, it will be shown on their statement of terms and conditions.

14. Reporting Impropriety, Dishonesty or Fraud

If an employee becomes aware of impropriety, dishonesty or fraud by another employee they are encouraged to come forward and voice their concerns to the Council's management or HR.

The Council has a **Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure**, which makes it clear that employees can raise their concerns in confidence without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.

15. Council Resources

Employees must ensure they use the Council's time, resources (such as financial resources, equipment, information) and property honestly, responsibly and efficiently at all times to ensure value for money to the public.

Any resources or property, issued to the employee by the Council, is for the purposes of effectively carrying out their duties (e.g. email, internet access, mobile phones, laptops and tablets). Any such items remain the property of the Council and as such can be withdrawn at any time if it is considered in the best interests of the service.

16. Personal Interests

Employees must disclose any potential conflict of interest they are aware of to their Head of Service. A record of this must be kept on the employees personnel file and must be readily available for audit purposes. A range of situations could create potential conflicts of interest by virtue of a personal commitment, such as (this list is not exhaustive):

- An employee's financial or non-financial interest in an activity or business that could be considered as a conflict with the Council's interests, or which could bring into question an employee's conduct.

- Any matters, which would normally be dealt with or accessed by an employee involving any individual companies or organisations, which the Council does business with, in which a relative, friend or associate has a financial interest.
- A trusteeship of a voluntary body.
- Membership of an organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules, membership or conduct (e.g. Freemasons): in this case the employee must record their membership by signing a register held by the Council's legal team.

The same principles apply to work carried out through partnership arrangements. If employees are involved in any type of partnership working with other agencies/companies and there appears to be a potential conflict of interest, they must register it as above.

17. Financial Interests

Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit and by fair competition against other tenders. Care must be taken to ensure that the selection process is conducted impartially and in strict accordance with Contract Standing Orders. Employees known to have a relevant personal interest must not take part in the selection.

18. Gifts

If, in the course of an employee's work, the employee (or a member of their family) is offered a gift, concession or some other benefit by an organisation, a client or member of the public, the employee or their family member must tactfully decline it. Minor items of a promotional nature such as diaries, calendars, mugs and other objects of a token value may be accepted. If in doubt, employees should discuss with their manager.

19. Hospitality

Invitations to hospitality events should be politely declined unless the employee has received prior authorisation to attend from their Head of Service. In considering such invitations the Head of Service will have in mind whether there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the Council at the event.

Under no circumstances should any gifts or hospitality be accepted from contractors who are potential tenderers in the period leading up to the tendering and awarding of a contract by the Council.

When offers of gifts or hospitality are made, this may be construed as an action taken to gain advantage or favour. Employees are required to declare any gifts/hospitality received in the register held by Legal services.

20. Security

Employees must visibly display their identification badge at all times whilst on Council premises. Employees must not allow any individual not displaying an ID badge to follow them into any secure area of the Council.

21. Working with elected Members

Mutual respect between employees and Members is essential to good local government. At all times, both elected Members and officers should conduct themselves appropriately and maintain professional working relationships.
~~Close personal familiarity between employees and elected Members can damage the relationship and cause embarrassment to other employees and elected Members. Such familiarity should be avoided. Further, useful information is available in the Member Officer Protocol section of the Constitution. (link to officer/member protocol in the Constitution)~~

22. Relationships at work

Appointments to posts in the Council are made on the basis of merit and the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the post. To avoid any accusation of bias, the employee should ensure that they are not involved in an appointment procedure where they are related to an applicant or have a close personal relationship/friendship with them outside of work.

It is not acceptable for the employee to have a direct reporting relationship (such as line manager/subordinate) with a person who is a family member or somebody with whom they are cohabiting or have an intimate personal relationship. Such relationships can give rise to challenges about integrity and suggestions of favouritism. It is therefore imperative that the Council can ensure decisions around recruitment processes, disciplinary procedures, pay, training, promotion or reimbursement of expenses are taken by individuals who have nothing more than a professional working relationship.

Employees must be open about the existence of a personal relationship with a direct report and they are required to disclose the matter to their Head of Service who will inform the Human Resources Manager. Failure to disclose any such relationship may result in disciplinary action. The Head of Service, in consultation with the Human Resources Manager, will make such arrangements as are deemed necessary to ensure that there is no

conflict of interest arising from such a situation. This may include reallocation of duties or the redeployment of one or other of the parties in the interests of the service.

23. Using Social Media for Business Use (See IT Security Policy)

Those authorised to use social media in the workplace have a responsibility to use the tools in an appropriate manner.

- Employees should not use any social media tool for Council business unless they have received appropriate training.
- All online participation must be attributable and transparent ie no anonymous posts or posts using a pseudonym.
- Authorised users must follow copyright and data protection laws. For the Council's protection as well as that of the employee, it is critical that they stay within the legal framework and be aware that libel, defamation, copyright and data protection laws apply. Permission should be sought to publish or report on conversations that they take part in at work. Be aware that content on social media websites may be subject to Freedom of Information requests.
- Employees should be aware that if they break the law using social media (for example by posting something defamatory), they will be personally responsible. They may also be subject to the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.
- The Council's reputation is closely linked to the behaviour of its employees, and everything published reflects on how the Council is perceived. Social media should be used in a way that adds value to the Council's business; i.e. solving problems; enhancing the Council's services, processes and policies; creates a sense of community; or helps to promote the Council's aims and values.
- Staff should be aware that by revealing certain details they might be more vulnerable to identity theft.

24. Using Social Media for Personal Use

As the use and popularity of social media grows, the lines between what is public and private, personal and professional have blurred. The Council respects their employees' right to personal use of social media out of the workplace.

However, employees should be aware that actions in and outside work that affect their work performance, the work of others, or adversely affect the Council's reputation, may become a matter for the Council.

Considering the following points may help avoid any conflict between personal use of social media and an employee's employment with the Council:

- If employees already use social networks or blogs for personal use they should be aware that any comments or images should not reflect on the Council in a negative manner;
- When using social media for personal purposes, employees must not imply they are speaking for the Council. The use of the Council e-mail address, Council logos or other Council identification should be avoided and it should be made clear that what is said is not representative of the views and opinions of the Council.
- Employees should comply with other Council policies when using social media. For example, they should be careful not to breach council confidentiality and information security or information management policies. If in doubt, don't post it.
- Racism, sectarianism or other types of discrimination are unlawful and are not acceptable in any context. Putting these comments on line effectively puts them in print.
- Employees should be aware that copyright and data protection laws, as well as libel, defamation and data protection; laws apply to them.
- Employees should also be familiar with guidance on social networking provided by professional or statutory bodies.

25. Safeguarding

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure the safety and welfare of children, young people and adults at risk. All employees who, during the course of their employment, have direct or indirect contact with children or adults at risk, or who have access to information about them, have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk. The Safeguarding Policy is available via the intranet or the employee's manager and compliance with it is mandatory.

26. Terrorism

Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on certain bodies (including local authorities) in the exercise of their functions to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". Authorities should place an appropriate amount of weight on the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism when they consider all the other factors relevant to how they carry out their usual functions.

The prevent strategy published by the government in 2011, is part of the overall counterterrorism strategy and as three specific objectives,

- To respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it
- Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support
- Work with sectors and institutions where there are risks or radicalisation that we need to address.

27. Conclusion

This code does not try to cover every situation. It tries to give an indication of the standards of behaviour or conduct that the Council expects.

Anyone in any doubt about how this applies to them should ask their line manager or HR.