

## EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT

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**OXFORD CITY COUNCIL**  
**EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT**

**1 POLICY STATEMENT**

The customers and communities we serve are entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all Council employees. This includes activities outside of work which could impact on the reputation of the Council or be an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Your role is to serve the Council in delivering services to the local community, providing advice and implementing its policies. In performing your duties, you should reflect the Council's Values and act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity.

You are accountable to, and owe a duty to, the Council. You 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 for the benefit of the community that you serve.

**2 STATUS AND SCOPE OF THE CODE**

- 2.1 This Code of Conduct applies to all employees and must be observed at all times. The Code also sets out the applicable standards of conduct required by all Council workers including agency employees and consultants. The term 'employees' in this Code refers to all those individuals.
- 2.2 It replaces any previous rules on conduct and complements the Council's Constitution, policies and procedures.
- 2.3 A breach of any part of this Code will be viewed as misconduct and may, depending on the circumstances, be treated as gross misconduct.

**3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Employees**

- 3.1 Employees are expected to:-
- observe and at the very least meet the standards of conduct set out in this Code,
  - ensure they seek advice at an early stage if they are uncertain about of the points covered in this Code or associated Policies and Procedures,
  - observe the required standards of conduct of any professional body that they are members of in relation to their work.

**Managers**

- 3.2 In addition to the expectations above managers are expected to:-
- hold employees to account for the observance of standards of behaviour set out in this Code,
  - assist employees seeking advice on any points referred to in this Code,
  - respect any requirement imposed by an employee's membership of a professional body in relation to their work.

## 4 THE COUNCIL'S VALUES, & PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

4.1 The Council has agreed a set of Values, developed with employees, which underpin the approach to people management. Employees are expected to adopt and demonstrate the values, which are:

- Taking personal responsibility for our actions
- Putting communities' and customers' first
- Embracing innovation
- Valuing diversity

4.2 Employees are expected to abide by the following principles of public life ('the Nolan principles') and should

- **Selflessness:** act solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity:** avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any conflicts of interest.
- **Objectivity:** act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability:** be accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness:** 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:** be truthful.
- **Leadership:** exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. Employees should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behavior wherever it occurs.

## 5 GENERAL OBLIGATIONS

### Professional Competence and Behaviour

Employees are expected to:

- 1) Maintain and seek to improve their professional knowledge and competence.
- 2) Ensure that those working for them have the appropriate level of competence, supervision and support.
- 3) Accept responsibility for their professional actions and decisions.
- 4) Apply the highest standards of timeliness, appropriateness and accuracy in the information and advice they provide.
- 5) Comply with the Council's Protocol on Member/Officer Relations, which is in the Council's Constitution.

### Ethical Standards and Integrity

Employees are expected to:

- 1) Maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct.

- 2) Establish, maintain and develop business relationships based on mutual confidence and trust.
- 3) Exhibit professional and personal integrity at all times, act within the law and take action when others fail or appear to be planning to fail to do so.
- 4) Be mindful of the distinction between acting in a personal and professional capacity, respect and demonstrate sensitivity for the customs, practices, culture and belief of others.
- 5) Advance employment practices that promote equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 6) Protect confidential information acquired as a result of business and professional relationships and not use it for personal advantage or for the benefit of third parties.
- 7) Understand and abide by the Council's rules regarding hospitality and offers of gifts (see appendix 1 for details).
- 8) Not be involved in any employment matters with any employee or prospective employee, to whom you are related, or with whom you have a close personal or business relationship outside work.
- 9) Note that where a candidate applies for a position in the same work area or under the supervision of a relative or partner, the candidate is required to disclose this and the relevant Deputy Chief Executive and Head of People will decide whether to allow the application to proceed.
- 10) Ensure that any additional paid work does not conflict with or have an adverse effect on the Council's interests and seek the written consent of your Service Director before taking up any paid work in any capacity (Further information is available on the intranet document 'Guidance for Managers and Employees on Additional Paid and Voluntary Work').
- 11) Declare any business interests that could be seen to affect their conduct, decision making or conflict with their role within the organisation by annually completing a declaration of interest form (available on the intranet).

### **Representative of the Council**

Employees are expected to:

- 1) Always act, in the course of your duties, in a way which supports and demonstrates the vision, values and corporate objectives of the Council and which upholds its reputation.
- 2) Not bring, nor risk bringing the Council into disrepute. This includes avoiding activities in your personal life that would require the Council to consider legal proceedings of any kind against you (for example acting as a private landlord, littering, etc.).
- 3) Not speak to the press in your capacity as an employee without the prior approval of the Communications team. All press releases must be issued by Policy, Culture and Communications. Any subjects that appear to have legal implications should also be referred to the Head of Law and Governance.
- 4) In talking to the media about personal matters or using social media of any kind you must make it clear that the views you are expressing are your personal views and not those of the Council.
- 5) Not bring the Council into disrepute and not wilfully harm its reputation, not use or reveal any information that you could only have known by being an employee.
- 6) In undertaking any sort of voluntary work or role, ensure you
  - o *clarify the role expected of you and whether you are acting in your own right or as the voice of the Council;*

- *If acting for the Council, you should clarify what authority is vested in you by the Council and other partner organisations by checking with your line manager as to the extent of your participation or authorisation. Liability can arise from formal membership of external organisations, and you should seek further advice from your line manager if you have reason to believe that any liability may arise.*
  - *You must not accept any voluntary position, in which you are acting on behalf of the Council, without the prior consent of your line manager.*
- 7) Wear any personal protective equipment or high visibility clothing issued to you at all relevant times.
  - 8) Where issued, wear any uniform, work wear or name badge issued to you and for all other employees ensure you are of reasonable general appearance befitting the role you hold.
  - 9) Wear your Council ID Badge at all times during working hours and expect to be challenged if not wearing it.
  - 10) Insist on a witness summons being issued to you if any party (other than the Council) asks you to give evidence in your official capacity in any legal proceedings ( whether criminal or civil) unless the Head of Law and Governance confirms that it is unnecessary to do so.
  - 11) In the event of an accident or any incident involving a possible claim against the Council or an individual, you should not admit any liability or blame either verbally or in writing. The decision as to legal liability is made at their sole discretion of the Council's insurers.

## **Stewardship**

Employees are expected to:

- 1) Act in accordance with the Council's Constitution, Council policies and the law.
- 2) Declare interests in contracts. If you believe you have a financial interest (whether directly or indirectly) in a contract which has been, or is proposed to be, entered into with the Council, you must give notice to the Chief Executive. It is a criminal offence not to do so.
- 3) Ensure that your professional judgement is not compromised nor could be perceived as being compromised because of bias, or the undue influence of others. It is a criminal offence, for an employee of a local authority, to demand or accept any fee or reward whatsoever other than their proper remuneration for any service or information obtained as a direct result of their employment with the Council.

## **Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults**

Employees are responsible for:

- 1) Carrying out your duties in a way that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 2) Bring matters of concern about safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults to the attention of your Line Manager, the Named Safeguarding Officer in their service area, or a Designated Officer.
- 3) Act in a way that protects themselves from wrongful allegations of abuse as far as possible.
- 4) Undertaking the required safeguarding training for their job.

*Further information and Guidance is available in the 'Oxford Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy, which includes 'Guidance*

on Safe Working Practices for working with Children'. The Council also has a 'Keeping People Safe' intranet page at <http://occweb/intranet/keeping-people-safe.cfm>

## **Data Protection**

Employees are required to:

- 1) Safeguard all confidential, commercially sensitive and personal data that you are working with or have access to and have regard to and adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 2) Adhere to Council policy and procedures on data protection and data security at all times. This includes policy and procedures relating to Home working/remote working, Information Security, E mail and use of the Public Services Network (PSN).
- 3) Consult your line manager or the Council's Data Protection Officer if you suspect any data protection or data security issues.
- 4) Not give sensitive information about the Council's service users to anyone unless there is a legal requirement, a business need or it is required to help the service user or prevent serious harm to the service user or others. If possible you should get the service users permission before giving information about them to others.
- 5) After you leave the Council, you still have a duty not to disclose personal data relating to others or exempt/confidential information that you have learnt in the course of your work at the Council.
- 6) If using the Public Services Network, undergo a number of checks to be granted access to this secure network and adhere at all times to the acceptable Usage Policy Agreement.

## **Council Resources, Intellectual Property, Copyright**

Employees are expected to:

- 1) Not do work that is not Council work of any sort in Council premises or by using Council equipment or materials, or during the Council's time. Some facilities, such as photocopying, may be made available to employees for private use on agreed terms and with prior approval.
- 2) In the event of an accident or any incident involving a possible claim against the Council or an individual, not admit any liability or blame either verbally or in writing. Note that all creative designs, writings, drawings and inventions you produce which are directly related to your employment are owned by the Council not you.
- 3) Take all reasonable measures to ensure that copyright is not breached when making copies from works, including newspapers, internet articles, printed/online journals, magazines, books and online publications.
- 4) Note that copies of newspaper materials may only be made by council employees within the conditions of the Newspaper Licensing Agency.
- 5) Note that scans/copies of works may not be made unless you have permission from the copyright owner, the copyright has expired, the use of the work is covered by a licensing scheme subscribed to by the Council, or use of the work is 'fair dealing' including the purposes of research and private study (non-commercial use) instruction or examination, criticism or review, news reporting, incidental inclusion, or accessibility for someone with a visual impairment.

## **Political Neutrality**

Employees are expected to:

- 1) Serve the Council as a whole, not just a single political group, and must ensure that the rights of all Members are respected.
- 2) Not allow personal or political opinions to interfere with your work (note – no employee can stand for election as a Councillor for Oxford City Council).
- 3) Only attend political group meetings if authorised by your Service Director or Deputy Chief Executive and only on the basis that the same briefing should be offered to all other political groups.
- 4) Note that if your post is politically restricted (see Politically Restricted Posts Policy) you may not participate in any formal political activity. These employees are unable to stand for elected office as a Councillor, (in any Authority) Member of Parliament (MP) or Member of the European Parliament (MEP). In addition, politically restricted employees cannot take part in the following activities:
  - *Writing or speaking publicly in a way which appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party;*
  - *Canvassing at any election on behalf of a political party, or at elections of Councillors, MPs or MEPs.*
  - *Holding office in a political party.*

## **6 REVIEW OF THIS CODE**

This Code will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it continues to be effective and up to date.

## **APPENDIX 1 – GIFTS, HOSPITALITY, BRIBERY, FRAUD & CORRUPTION**

### **1 Gifts & hospitality**

- 1.1 It is a criminal offence under the Local Government Act 1972, for an employee of a local authority, to demand or accept any fee or reward whatsoever other than their proper remuneration for any service or information obtained as a direct result of their employment with the Council. Acceptance of rewards, gifts and hospitality without authorisation could be regarded as gross misconduct and will be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.
- 1.2 As a general rule, with the exception of small gifts given as part of a clearly established commercial practice (such as pens, mouse mats, mugs etc.) employees should tactfully refuse any personal gift offered to them or any member of their family by an organisation or person who has, or seeks, dealings with the Council.
- 1.3 With regard to hospitality, in general terms it will be more acceptable where it is offered to a group rather than specifically to any individual employee. For example, invitations to a Society or Institute function are likely to be acceptable. However, extravagant offers of meals in restaurants, theatre tickets or use of holiday accommodation would not be acceptable.
- 1.4 Hospitality may only be accepted with the approval of the relevant Service Director.
- 1.5 All offers of gifts (except small gifts such as those referred to in paragraph 1.2) and hospitality must be recorded in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality (whether accepted or not). To record an offer of a gift or hospitality you must complete the declaration in iTrent self-service (within the travel and expenses section). The Service Director must then authorise or reject each declaration submitted. The Monitoring Officer reviews all Gifts and Hospitality records on an annual basis.

### **2 Bribery, Fraud & Corruption**

- 2.1 The Council adopts a zero tolerance attitude in regard to bribery fraud and corruption and an assurance to protect the public funds it administers.
- 2.2 There are policies in place to report, investigate and resolve any 'discrepancies'. All Policies can be found on the Intranet; <http://occweb/intranet/finance.cfm>. The Avoiding Bribery Fraud and Corruption Policy and Whistleblowing Policy can also be found under Employment Policies and Procedures.
- 2.3 The policies also give assurance that the Authority is compliant to the law. Employees will immediately report any concern of wrong doing and adhere to the following Policies:
  - The Avoiding Bribery Fraud and Corruption Policy is a clear statement of intent to eliminate all forms of bribery fraud and corruption and the responsibility to investigate and report all alleged irregularities.
  - The Council's Whistle Blowing Policy (Part 25 of the Constitution) encourages officers to blow the whistle within the Council and protects the whistle blower from reprisals.
  - The Money Laundering Policy, Procedure and Reporting Form is the internal process required by law to prevent the Council's services, employees and elected members from being used to launder money. There is a responsibility to report any concerns regarding money laundering or any attempt to launder money.