

# GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The public must have full confidence in the professionalism and integrity of all members of staff.
- 1.2 This Code applies to all members of staff when working for or acting on behalf of the Council, including temporary and casual workers, agency workers, interims and contractors. Where there is no direct employment-contract relationship, regard shall be had to this code when assessing acceptable behavioural standards.
- 1.3 The Code does not affect your rights and responsibilities under the law; its purpose is to provide clear and helpful guidance.
- 1.4 It is important for you to know that disciplinary action is possible if the Code is not followed and you should familiarise yourself with this document.
- 1.5 You should always seek advice from your line manager if in doubt about any aspect of this Code, especially the relevance of any personal relationships or interests<sup>1</sup>.

### 2. Version

- 2.1 This document is version 2.0. It will be reviewed and updated as and when necessary to ensure that it is up to date and relevant.

### 3. General standards

#### 3.1 You shall:

- Provide the highest possible standard of service to the public
- Provide impartial advice to councillors and the public
- Report to the appropriate management any breaches of this Code.
- Declare any gift, loan, reward, favour or advantage given to you because of the job you do.
- Present a smart professional appearance.
- If you are issued with a uniform, only wear it when undertaking your professional duties.
- Comply with the Council's [Behavioural Standards](#).

#### 3.2 You shall not:

- Conduct yourself in a way that would bring the Council into disrepute.

#### [Organisational Culture Framework](#)

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#### <sup>1</sup> What is an 'interest'?

An interest can be something like the house or the area where you/your family live. Alternatively, it can be something you, your family or someone close to you do aside from working for the council like another job, membership of a political party or a club or society.

#### 4. Political neutrality

4.1 You should remember that the Council is a political organisation and be mindful of this in all areas of your work and personal life. Some jobs in the Council are 'politically restricted' and those jobs are subject to rules about personal life as well as in work. The Council has written some [Guidance on Politically Restricted Posts](#).

4.2 You **shall**:

- Address all councillors respectfully and impartially.
- Be politically neutral when offering advice to councillors.
- Act according to any political restrictions set out in your job description.

4.3 You **shall not**:

- Allow your own personal or political opinions to interfere with your work.
- Attend political group<sup>2</sup> meetings without your director's knowledge and approval.

#### 5. Use of media and social media

5.1 The 'media' or the 'press' means news websites, radio or television stations and newspapers. When we talk about 'social media', we mean online social networking websites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.

5.2 If you post malicious, untrue or otherwise inappropriate statements about the Council, councillor(s) or members of staff on social media sites, this will be a misuse of social networking and any such posting(s) may result in the Council taking disciplinary action against you.

5.3 You **shall**:

- Direct anyone from the media with a query to contact the Council's trained officers in the Communications and PR Team.
- Be aware that any comments you make on social media websites will be public and **expressing in a public forum (whether via news or other media or other online or social media) personal views which conflict with the policies of the Council may result in disciplinary action being taken against you for bringing the Council into disrepute.**
- Always comply with the Council's [Communications Protocol](#) and [social media standards](#).

5.4 You **shall not**:

- Post comments or disclose information about Council business, other officer colleagues, councillors or the Council that could be described as offensive,

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#### <sup>2</sup> What is a Group?

Councillors can form political groups and the largest group or a combination of groups usually form an administration to provide the political leadership for the authority. There is statutory recognition for political groups and it is common practice for such groups to consider matters of Council business in advance of consideration by the relevant Council committee.

abusive or damaging even if those comments are made outside of working hours.

- Make available any of the Council's confidential information without the proper permission.

## **6. Disclosure of information**

6.1 Sharing confidential information without permission is a serious matter and may result in dismissal under the Council's **Disciplinary Policy and Procedure**. It could also be a criminal offence and lead to criminal proceedings.

6.2 You **shall**:

- Know and apply the Council's policies on the management of sensitive information, and be aware of the types of information that can be shared depending upon the person who asking for it.
- Check with your manager or the Monitoring Officer if you are unsure what information can be shared.
- Maintain the confidentiality of all sensitive information (whether personal or otherwise) that you have access to in the course of doing your job.

6.3 You **shall not**:

- Use Council-held information in a way that would promote your own personal interests or the interests of others, or share it with others to use in such a way.
- Share personal information about another officer or councillor without proper authority to do so.

## **7. Relationships**

You **shall**:

- Treat other members of staff with fairness, dignity and respect. The Council will not tolerate bullying, harassment or victimisation in any form. **Bullying and harassment policy**
- Be courteous, efficient, and impartial to councillors, members of the public and service users. **Protocol on Councillor/Officer relations for guidance on role and relationships.**
- Tell your director if you have any business or personal relationships with an external service provider or potential contractor working for the council.
- Inform your manager if you are related to someone at work or if you are having a close personal relationship with someone at work.

## **8. Use of the Council's equipment and resources**

You **shall**:

- Use Council-owned equipment and resources given to you to do your job in a lawful and responsible manner.
- Strive to ensure value for money when undertaking your professional duties.

- Use Council facilities and equipment only in connection with the duties required by your job.
- Follow the rules regarding:
  - [ICT users' policy](#)
  - [Information systems security policy](#)
  - [Data protection policy](#)
  - [Council's rules on intellectual property and copyright](#)

## 9. Contracts and tendering

### 9.1 You shall:

- Display accountability and openness and follow [Council's Procurement Procedures rules](#) during the tendering process.
- Respect the confidentiality of tenders. [Awarding contracts](#)
- Disclose in writing to your line manager and the Monitoring Officer, any interest you may have in a contract which is, or is proposed to be, appointed by the Council, in accordance with s117 of the Local Government Act 1972.

### 9.2 You shall not:

- Offer, promise or give someone a reward to make them perform their activities improperly.
- Accept, agree to accept or request a reward in return for performing an activity . [Anti-fraud and corruption policy](#)
- Bribe anyone in order to win business, keep business or gain a business advantage for the council. [Anti-bribery policy](#)

## 10. Appointments and employment matters

### 10.1 It you are involved in staff recruitment you shall:

- Appoint based on merit and purely on the ability of the applicant to undertake the duties of the post.

### 10.2 It you are involved in staff recruitment you shall not:

- Be involved in the appointment of a relative or friend
- Be involved in any decisions relating to discipline, remuneration or promotion of any member of staff who is a relative, partner, or close friend outside work.
- Show any favouritism for any member of staff who is a relative, partner, or close friend outside work.

## 11. Outside commitments

### 11.1 You shall:

- Usually be able to take up additional employment outside of your job for the Council provided it does not conflict with your Council role; however, you must first notify your line manager.
- Declare any additional hours working for an external employer to your line manager.

11.2 You **shall not**:

- If you are a senior officer, take up other employment in addition to your Council role, without the express consent of your director.
- Undertake activities outside of your Council work that may be regarded as bringing the Council into disrepute.

**12. Personal Interests**

12.1 If your job is Band 6 and above, it is expected that you **shall inform your director**:

- If you, a close family member or someone with whom you have a close relationship has a financial interest in any matter being dealt with by the council.
- If you, a close family member or someone with whom you have a close relationship has submitted a planning application.
- If you have any interest in any council decision that you are able to influence for example, if you are a member of local club, society, or organisation in receipt of council grants, or which is a tenant or licensee of the Council.
- If you are a member of a political party.

12.2 Your director will ask you to fill out a **Staff Declaration of Interest** form. What you declare will be included on a register of senior staff interests with access limited to your director, the Managing Director, political group leaders and committee chairmen.

**13. Safeguarding**

13.1 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure the safety and welfare of children, young people and adults at risk and the Council has a **Safeguarding Policy**.

13.2 When you are doing your job, if you have direct or indirect contact with children or adults at risk, or if you have access to information about them, you have a duty to safeguard and promote their welfare.

13.3 If you have concerns relating to the welfare of a child or adult at risk, you must report these to your line manager or your director.

**14. Gifts, hospitality and sponsorship**

14.1 You **shall**:

- Tell your director about any gift received or hospitality accepted over a value of £25, which will be placed on a 'register of gifts and hospitality' with access limited to the Managing Director and the Monitoring Officer
- Be aware that limited hospitality (a meal/refreshments) is acceptable as long as it does not reach a level that it might seem like it has influenced a business decision.
- Decline a gift or an offer of hospitality if you believe that the offer was made in order to exert influence over you or the Council or if you are uncertain about the reason for the invitation.
- Be aware that a modest lunch is normally acceptable, but entertainment is unacceptable unless it is for charity fundraising.

- Be aware that the rules concerning the acceptance of gifts or hospitality will apply if an outside organisation should sponsor a Council activity by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily.

14.2 You **shall not**:

- Appear to influence the Council's relationship with anyone by accepting any gifts and hospitality from them.
- Accept any gifts, other than items of small value [£25 or less].
- Seek or accept special treatment from anyone because you work for the Council.
- Seek or accept special treatment regarding the use of any Council owned facility, unless you have been given permission to do so by the Council.
- Directly benefit yourself, or anyone with whom you have a close relationship, from any Council sponsored event or activity.

**15. Equalities and health and safety issues**

You should read and follow the Council's policies relating to [equal opportunities](#), [alcohol and substance misuse](#) and [health and safety](#).

**16. Notification of Criminal Investigations and other required disclosures**

You should inform your manager in writing straight away if during your employment with the Council you are arrested, charged with, or convicted of a criminal offence.

**17. Breach of code of conduct**

Any breach of the code of conduct may be regarded as a disciplinary offence.

[Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#)

[Grievance policy and procedure](#)

[Whistleblowing procedure](#)

*I have read and understood the content of this document*

Staff Signature

Manager Signature

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Date.....

Date .....