Human Resources **Conduct**

Code of conduct policy

Essex County Council

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The aim of this code

The Code of Conduct defines the responsibilities and standards required of all who work for and on behalf of ECC, including interims, agency workers and ECC employees who are seconded to other organisations.

Principles

This code meets the recommendations of the Nolan Committees standards in public life. The 7 principles are:

- **Selflessness –** you should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity** - you must avoid placing yourself under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence you in your work. You should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for yourself, your family, or your friends. You must declare and resolve any interests and relationships
- **Objectivity** - you must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias
- **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 exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. You should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Breach of this code

1. Breaches of this code (inside or outside of work) will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action. Serious breaches of the code may be considered gross misconduct and result in dismissal without notice.

2. You must participate in any investigations, including those carried out by the Monitoring Officer, who is responsible for reporting any actual or potential breaches of the law or mal-administration to the Council and/or Cabinet.

When working on behalf of ECC you must:

1. Act in the interests of ECC, and in accordance with the principles of public life of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

2. Comply with ECC's constitution, service requirements, policies and standards, legislation and other professional standards which apply to your role.

3. Declare to your Head of Service, any potential or actual conflicts of interest or relationships that may impact on your work, or that of ECC.

4. Report any concerns or breaches of this code to your manager.

5. Ask your manager if you are unsure what is required of you.

Standards required

Political Neutrality

When working on behalf of ECC you must follow every lawfully expressed policy of ECC.

You must:
- remain politically neutral and objective in your work role.

You must not:
- allow your own personal or political opinions to interfere with your work.

Working with elected Members

Mutual respect between those working on behalf of ECC and elected members is essential to good local government.

You must:
- work for all Members and give appropriate and impartial advice to Members;
- ensure working relationships are kept on a professional basis.

Politically restricted posts

Legislation sets out certain local authority posts that are politically restricted. If you hold such a post:

You must:
- remain politically neutral in your work role.

You must not:
- stand as a candidate for public elected office (other than to a Parish Council);
- hold office in a political party;
- canvass at elections;
- speak or write publicly, demonstrating support for a political party.

Personal conduct

As a representative of ECC, you are expected to conduct yourself to the highest standards.

You must:
- carry out the full requirements of your role, aligned to your contract of employment and ECC policies;
- behave politely and reasonably;
- maintain acceptable standards of appearance and personal hygiene;
- demonstrate your commitment to valuing diversity and equality;
- attend work in accordance with the terms of your contract of employment and comply with sickness and other absence policies;
- wear your security pass whilst representing ECC;
- report any shortfalls in the provision of ECC services to your line manager;
- keep relationships with Members, officers, contractors or partners, potential contractors or service users, on a professional basis. If you have a personal relationship with any of these groups or individuals, you must declare this using the declaration form;
- declare any potential or actual conflicts of interest that may impact on your work, or that of ECC;
- avoid damage to ECC's reputation or services;
- register any financial and non financial interests with your line manager.

You must not:
- engage in any conduct that is harmful to ECC or its interests, or which brings legal action against ECC;
- be under the influence of alcohol or un-prescribed drugs so as to adversely affect your role;
- misuse your official position or information obtained in the course of your work, for personal interest or the interest of others.

Gifts and hospitality

As a representative of ECC, it is important that you treat any offer of gifts or hospitality with care.

You must:
- make sure that any modest gifts or hospitality accepted on behalf of ECC are authorised by your manager using the declaration form.

You must not:
- accept personal gifts, loans, fees, rewards or advantage from contractors, potential contractors including those who have previously worked for ECC, service users or outside suppliers.

If you are unclear what is acceptable, ask your manager.

Further information can also be found in the Ethics and Governance Gifts and Hospitality policy.

Handling ECC money or sponsorship

ECC is a publicly funded organisation and as such, you must be familiar with ECC's Financial Regulations, its scheme of delegation for Financial Management and Standing Orders.

You must:
- use ECC funds in a responsible, accountable and lawful way;
- comply with ECC's financial regulations and take legal and financial advice where appropriate;
- seek value for money;
- comply with the policy issued by your service if your role involves handling service user's finances;
- make sure that any sponsorship accepted is related to ECC business;
- if you suspect financial irregularity, corruption or fraud, contact the Head of Assurance;
- make sure you do not benefit from any contract or sponsorship ECC may receive, or show any favour to a partner, spouse, relative, friend or associate.

Procuring, managing or using ECC contracts

Where your role involves procuring, managing or using ECC contracts:

You must:
- comply with the procurement rules and financial regulations on the award of orders and contracts.

You must not:
- discriminate against any part of the local community in the tendering and contracting process.

Intellectual property

The work you do on behalf of ECC is called intellectual property. Before you disclose any design or invention created during your work, you must seek permission from your manager and Head of Service.

Reporting improper or illegal activities

If you are concerned about any activities which you think may conflict with the Code of Conduct, you should raise the matter with your line manager or Head of Service.

You must:
- report any activity which you believe is illegal, improper, unethical, dangerous or a breach of policy to your line manager or Head of Service.

The Whistle-blowing policy gives protection to employees, consultants or contractors who

raise concerns of this nature that are in the public interest.

Responsibilities when managing others

As a manager, your leadership skills are key elements to your role.

You must:
- maintain an environment of respect, recognition and support and to induct all new employees to their role;
- make appointments only on the basis of merit and capability to carry out the role;
- make sure decisions relating to discipline, promotion and pay are objectively justified;
- identify and assess all risks and ensure they are managed appropriately;
- ensure business continuity arrangements are in place to enable continued delivery of services;
- exercise a duty of care to employees and customers, ensuring health and safety requirements are met.

You must not
- be involved in a selection process or interview if you are related to an applicant or in a personal relationship with them or a member of their immediate family.

Outside work

Outside work means any paid or unpaid work including voluntary work, undertaken in addition to your work at ECC.

You must:
- discuss any proposed paid or unpaid work with your line manager and use the declaration form before accepting. The work must not conflict with your role or the interests of ECC;
- comply with the Working Time Regulations which govern the total number of hours you can safely work.

Further information can be found in the 'Permission to undertake outside work' policy.

Diversity and equality

Demonstrating your commitment to equality and diversity is an integral part of your role at ECC.

You must:
- treat others with respect and value diversity;
- seek to review all policies, procedures and services under your responsibility to assess whether any group is being unfairly discriminated against (known as equality impact assessments);
- take steps to eliminate discrimination and remove barriers to fair treatment.

You must not:
- discriminate unfairly in employment practices, the provision of facilities or services.

Further information can be found in the Comprehensive Equality policy and the Diversity and Equality in Employment policies.

Protecting confidential information

Maintaining confidentiality of sensitive information is essential.

You must:
- comply with our policy on Information Security and Communication and supporting standards;
- report any suspected breach of information security;
- label and store information documents to allow access to authorised users and restrict unauthorised users;

- refer any media or press enquiries to the external communications team immediately, and follow their instructions;
- arrange for cover during any absence appropriately.

You must not:
- disclose your password to anyone;
- use information or facilities provided, for unauthorised personal use, improper or commercial gain, or for fraudulent or malicious activities;
- compromise the security of ECC information, for example by installing unauthorised software, inappropriately securing information or interfering with standard security settings.

Using ECC equipment, materials and property

The facilities and equipment provided as part of your work belong to ECC.

You must:
- comply with health and safety regulations and use personal protective equipment as required;
- take care of ECC property or equipment, keeping it secure and reporting any breakages or breaches in security;
- use equipment and facilities for authorised purposes only.

You must not:
- use ECC equipment or property for personal gain or fraudulent activity;
- use ECC vehicles for unauthorised purposes.

Working with service users

When working with service users, you should be familiar with ECC policies, service standards and professional standards as they relate to your role.

You must:
- give the highest level of care to service users;
- keep all service users' money, personal records, information and correspondence secure in accordance with ECC and service policies, Caldicott principles and the Data Protection Act;
- make sure service users money and personal belongings are handled safely and in accordance with ECC policies;
- report any concerns about the care of service users to your line manager.

You must not:
- give any service information to anyone except those authorised to receive it;
- form inappropriate personal relationships with service users, their relatives or carers.

Commitment to the environment

In demonstrating your commitment to improving the environment:

You must:
- consider the environmental impact of your actions;
- reduce, re-use and recycle wherever possible;
- develop environmentally sensitive policies and practices with suppliers, partners and customers.

More information and help

Associated documents

Other information on the intranet:

- Data protection in employment
- Declaration of interest
- Disciplinary
- Diversity and equality in employment
- Driving standards
- Drugs and alcohol
- Gifts and hospitality
- Improving performance
- Outside work
- Personal relationships at work
- Politically restricted posts
- Sickness absence
- Social media policy and procedures
- Travel and expenses policy
- Whistle-blowing

Other relevant information available on the intranet or via your line manager:

- Business continuity
- Constitution (including member / officer conduct)
- Corporate risk management strategy and policies
- Data protection and GDPR
- Equality and Diversity web pages
- Equality Impact Assessment guidance
- Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation for Financial Management
- Health and Safety
- Information Security and Communication
- Making information accessible policy
- Our standards for acceptable use of ECC resources and assets (including personal use)
- Procurement web pages

Contact for more information

HR Advice and Support

Tel: 0333 0134 300

Email: HRadviceandsupport@essex.gov.uk

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