

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

The City Council has chosen to adopt a Code of Conduct, which sets out minimum standards that employees should observe. It lays down guidelines for employees to help maintain and improve standards and protect employees from misunderstanding or criticism.

CONTENTS

	Page No.
1. Introduction	2
2. Status of the Code	2
3. Scope of the Code	2
4. Standards	2
5. Disclosure of Information	4
6. Political Neutrality	5
7. Relationships	5
8. Appointment and Other Employment Matters	6
9. Outside Commitments	6
10. Personal Interests	6
11. Equality Issues	6
12. Separation of Roles During Tendering	6
13. Corruption	7
14. Use of Financial Resources	7
15. Hospitality and Gifts	7
16. Sponsorship - Giving and Receiving	8
17. Disciplinary Rules	9

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all local government employees.
- 1.2 This Code is based on a model produced, after consultation, by the local authority associations and the Local Government Management Board. It has been developed to take into account Norwich City Council corporate policies. Consultations have also taken place locally with the Trade Unions. A copy is issued to every employee.
- 1.3 This Code takes into account "The Seven Principles of Public Life" which are included in the Nolan Committee's report on "Standards in Public Life". They are; selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

2. STATUS OF THE CODE

- 2.1 The City Council has chosen to adopt the Code of Conduct. The Code sets out minimum standards that employees should observe. It lays down guidelines for employees to help maintain and improve standards and protect employees from misunderstanding or criticism.

3. SCOPE OF THE CODE

- 3.1 The Code applies to all employees of Norwich City Council. Activities carried out by City Council employees acting as members of companies or voluntary organisations are subject to the minimum standards within this Code.

4. STANDARDS

- 4.1 As a Norwich City Council employee you are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public. You have the following duties;
 - (i) A duty of service - to work in accordance with your contract of employment; e.g. - not to be absent or late without permission.
 - (ii) A duty to obey reasonable instructions, procedures and regulations.
 - (iii) A duty to care - to be competent and capable and not to be negligent in work.
 - (iv) A duty of good faith - to be honest and not accept a fee or commission or gifts from those who do business with the Council or to divulge confidential information about the Council.

Personal Standards

4.2 Norwich City Council employees are expected to;

- (i) Be positive, helpful and co-operative in dealing with colleagues, members and the public. You should read and comply with the leaflet on Service Standards.
- (ii) Provide impartial advice to councillors and colleagues.
- (iii) Remember that as a Council employee your primary responsibility is to the community as expressed by the corporate policies of the City Council. You should not allow departmental or sectional or other interests to take precedence over corporate policies. Within these policies you should respect the defined roles of departments, service centres and colleagues and avoid conflict and disharmony within the organisation.
- (iv) Remember that you are accountable for your actions and decisions and be prepared to submit yourself to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to your office.
- (v) Ensure that your personal appearance is consistent with the public's expectations, bearing in mind the work you do.
- (vi) Bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service.
- (vii) Report to the appropriate manager any serious impropriety or breach of procedure. (see "Whistleblowing" Policy.)

Competence Standards

4.3 All employees are expected to perform their duties with:

- (i) due care,
- (ii) competence,
- (iii) diligence and continue to maintain such standards.

4.4 If you hold a specific technical and professional qualification you should:

- (i) carry out your duties in accordance with the standards set by your professional body;
- (ii) conform with any guidelines on ethics produced by your professional body.

Council Policies, etc.

- 4.5 The Council has a Constitution, Financial Rules and a number of corporate policies.
- 4.6 Your section or directorate will have specific rules, procedures and codes of practice which apply to the particular department workplace and type of work in which you are engaged. These rules are communicated by management in various ways, including oral instructions, procedure manuals, notices, information sheets and memoranda/e-mail.
- 4.7 You are expected to comply with these rules and policies in carrying out your duties.

5. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

- 5.1 The law requires certain types of information to be available to Councillors, auditors, government departments, and the public. These are outlined in the Council's Publication Scheme, which has been produced in accordance with the Freedom of Information act. Copies are available from your Manager or on the Council's website.
- 5.2 Employees are expected to be open, informative and truthful in dealing with colleagues, members and the public and to provide the information to which each is entitled in accordance with the "Freedom of Information Act". If you are not sure what should be made available, you should find out from your manager or from elsewhere.
- 5.3 There is a balance between freedom of information and confidentiality for commercial reasons that must be considered at all times by employees in services where commercial sensitivity is essential.
- 5.4 Any information obtained in the course of your employment should not be used for your personal gain or benefit, and you should not pass it on to anyone else who could use it for his or her benefit. Do not divulge any personal information about a fellow employee or a councillor without permission unless disclosure is required by law.
- 5.5 Only employees authorised to do so may talk to the press or otherwise make personal statements on behalf of their service, directorate or the Council. If you are so authorised you should make sure you read the Council's Policy on "Dealing with the Media". This contains detailed advice and can be obtained from the Communications Unit.

6. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY

- 6.1 Employees serve the authority as a whole. You must ensure that the individual rights of all councillors are respected.
- 6.2 You may be invited to advise political groups. Do so in a way that does not compromise your political neutrality. If you are in a politically restricted post you must ensure that you comply with the requirements of such posts.
- 6.3 All employees whether or not politically restricted must follow all lawful policies of the Council and must not let their own personal or political opinions interfere with their work.

7. RELATIONSHIPS WITH: -

Councillors

- 7.1 You are responsible to the Council through your senior managers. Mutual respect between you and councillors is essential to good local government. Avoid familiarity with individual councillors, which could damage your relationship with and/or prove embarrassing to other employees and councillors.

The Local Community and Service Users

- 7.2 Always remember the Council's responsibility is to the community and give a courteous, efficient and impartial service to all groups and individuals within the Council's policies. Try to be positive, constructive and inclusive. When necessary make extra efforts to communicate with people with disabilities in accordance with Council policies.

Contractors

- 7.3.1 All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, should be made known to your Head of Service (see paragraph 10.1 below). If you engage or supervise contractors or deal with suppliers on behalf of the Council then you must record any past or present business/private relationships with those organisations with the Democratic Services Officer and keep your Head of Service or your Director informed.
- 7.4 Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenders, in accordance with the Council's procedures and no special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives in the tendering process. No part of the local community should be discriminated against.

8. APPOINTMENT AND OTHER EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

- 8.1 If you are involved in the appointment of staff you must follow the Council's Recruitment Guidelines. If you are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship with one outside work, you must declare it to the HR Officer.
- 8.2 You should not be involved in decisions about discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for someone with whom you have a close personal relationship.

9. OUTSIDE COMMITMENTS

- 9.1 You should not take outside employment which conflicts with the Council's interests. If you are paid above Spinal Column Point 28 you are required to obtain consent from your Head of Service (see paragraph 10.1 below) before taking any outside employment.
- 9.2 You should comply with any Council rules about the ownership of intellectual property and copyright in work done by you during your employment with the Council. If in doubt you must consult your Head of Service.

10. PERSONAL INTERESTS

- 10.1 You must declare to your Head of Service (*see table below) any financial or non-financial interests that you consider could conflict with the Council's interests, or could cause your conduct to be questioned. Such interests must be registered with the Democratic Services Officer.

Reporting hierarchy for financial and non-financial interests	
Officer:	Reports to:
Chief Executive	Monitoring Officer
Director	Chief Executive
Head of Service	Director
All other employees	Head of Service

- 10.2 You must declare to your Head of Service membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance, and which has secrecy about rules, membership or conduct. If you are a member of an organisation of this type you must register this with the Democratic Services Officer.
- 10.3 When attending meetings of the Council or its Committees you should declare any financial interest in any item and withdraw from the meeting while the matter is under consideration unless authorised to remain in the meeting by the Members present.

11. EQUALITY ISSUES

- 11.1 You must comply with and promote the Council's equality policies and other corporate policies. The public and employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity.

12. SEPARATION OF ROLES DURING TENDERING

- 12.1 If you are involved in the tendering for Council contracts or dealing with contractors you should be clear about the separation of client and contractor roles within the authority. You must comply with the Council's Contract Standing Orders. You must be aware of the need for accountability and openness but also respect the need for commercial confidentiality.
- 12.2 If you are in a contractor or client unit you must deal with customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors fairly and impartially.
- 12.3 If you see confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors you must not disclose that information to any unauthorised person.
- 12.4 If you intend to participate in a management or employee buyout you must inform the Chief Executive or your Head of Service and record this with the Democratic Services Officer, you must withdraw from the contract awarding processes immediately.
- 12.5 You must not treat current or former employees or their partners, close relatives or associates more or less favourably than other people when considering the award of contracts to businesses run by them or employing them.

13. CORRUPTION

- 13.1 It is a serious criminal offence to corruptly receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage. If an allegation is made you may have to demonstrate that any such rewards have not been corruptly obtained.

14. USE OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- 14.1 You must ensure that you use public funds entrusted to you in a responsible and lawful way. You should try to obtain value for money to the local community and avoid legal challenge to the authority. You must comply with the Council's Financial Rules.

15. HOSPITALITY AND GIFTS

15.1 *Introduction*

As public service employees, Council staff must act, and be seen to act, with the highest standards of integrity. In the course of your work you may encounter situations, which, if not handled properly, could call your integrity into question. Examples of such situations include being offered tokens of appreciation or opportunities to meet socially with contractors or suppliers to the Council. This Guidance aims to help you to deal with such situations.

The over-riding principle is that you, your family, your friends or any organisation of which you are a member or with which you are closely associated should not accept any gift, consideration or hospitality that would call into question:

- your honesty;
- your ability to deal impartially and equitably with all service users, potential or actual contractors or suppliers;
- your commitment and ability to pursue the best interests of the City Council.

If you would feel uncomfortable giving an account of your actions to management or reading an account of your actions on the front page of the local newspaper – don't take the action.

To protect you and the Council there is a Register of Disclosures and Interests and a Register of Gifts and Hospitality held by the Democratic Services Officer.

This Guidance should help you to understand what to register. If you need any guidance or advice on matters raised in this document, speak to your manager or to the Democratic Services Officer.

15.2 *Gifts*

You must not solicit gifts, additional payments or any other personal advantage (such as discounts or free services) from any service user, potential or actual contractor or supplier.

You must not accept payments or any other form of personal advantage from any service user, potential or actual contractor or supplier. The only exception to this is that some service users like to "tip" employees such as Housing Wardens, particularly at Christmas. Small tokens of appreciation may be accepted in such circumstances but a record must be kept of tips received. The record should be given to the most senior employee at the work place who will then pass it to their 'off-site' manager.

You may accept gifts of token value such as pens, diaries, etc. from potential or actual contractors or suppliers. Such gifts may be kept for your personal or business use. You should, however, be aware of the adverse impression that may be created for competitors seeking to do business with the Council.

You may accept gifts with nominal value from visitors to the City Council when the gifts are proffered as tokens of friendship between Norwich and the visitors' hometown or country.

If you receive a gift of more than token or nominal value and it would cause offence or be impracticable to return it, you should register the gift (see below) and inform your manager. Such gifts will normally either be donated to a charity or may, if suitable, be kept for use on City Council premises.

If you are offered a gift and you believe or suspect that the offer is made with the intention of influencing you to give favourable treatment to a service user, potential or actual contractor or supplier, you must inform your Manager, Head of Service or Director, or the Chief Executive.

15.3 **Hospitality**

You must not solicit hospitality (for example meals, tickets to sporting or cultural events) from any service user, potential or actual contractor or supplier.

You must not accept offers of hospitality unless you have the permission of your Head of Service, Director or the Chief Executive. Hospitality, which you have permission to accept, must be registered in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality. Permission will not normally be granted for hospitality that requires overnight accommodation at the host's expense.

You should not allow a potential or actual contractor or supplier to pay for you to visit their sites or premises to inspect their goods or services. If such visits are necessary, the City Council will meet the costs involved. When visiting potential or actual contractors or suppliers you may accept refreshments appropriate to a work situation.

You do not need prior permission to accept a meal which is offered in work-related circumstances and which would enable your work to be expedited, provided that the costs are reasonable in the circumstances.

You do not need prior permission to accept modest hospitality offered at conferences and courses provided that the hospitality is offered to numbers of people in similar roles (i.e. is corporate) rather than personal.

If you are offered hospitality and you believe or suspect that the offer is made with the intention of influencing you to give favourable treatment to a

service user, potential or actual contractor or supplier, you must inform your Head of Service/Director, or the Chief Executive.

15.4 ***Registers of Disclosures and Interests and Gifts and Hospitality***

The Council's Register of Disclosures and Interests and Register of Gifts and Hospitality are held by the Democratic Services Officer.

Electronic copies of forms for registering interests, gifts, hospitality etc. can be obtained from on-line forms on the Intranet. Completed forms should be e-mailed to the Democratic Services Officer or, if in hard copy format, sent to him at City Hall in an envelope clearly marked as "Declaration of", as appropriate.

15.5 ***Whistleblowing***

If you believe or suspect that a colleague in the City Council or any service user, potential or actual contractor or supplier is involved in corrupt or questionable practices, you must inform your Head of Service, Director, or the Chief Executive. The City Council's Policy on "Whistleblowing" (section J5 of the Personnel Policies Handbook) covers such matters.

16. **SPONSORSHIP - GIVING AND RECEIVING**

- 16.1 Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a Council activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.
- 16.2 When the Council sponsors an event or service neither you nor your partner, any relative or personal friends must benefit from the sponsorship in a direct way without there being full disclosure to your Head of Service. You must register any such interest with the Democratic Services Officer.
- 16.3 Where the Council through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means is giving support in the community, and you are giving advice ensure that it is impartial and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

17. **DISCIPLINARY RULES**

- 17.1 This Code forms part of the Council's Disciplinary Rules. The rules applied are those of normal good conduct. The rules are expressed in the Council's Disciplinary Procedure, which has the aims of establishing and maintaining a fair and equitable standard of discipline throughout the Council and encouraging improvements in conduct.

- 17.2 All employees should have a copy of the Council's Disciplinary Procedure. If you do not have one please contact your Manager or HR Services.