

PART 14

EMPLOYEES' CODE OF CONDUCT

WORCESTER CITY COUNCIL
EMPLOYEES' CODE OF CONDUCT

INTRODUCTION

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees who work for local government. This Code outlines existing laws, regulations and conditions of service and provides further guidance to assist the City Council and its employees in their day-to-day work. The Code is produced in the light of the challenges that employees face in the new and more commercially orientated environment.

STATUS OF THE CODE

The aim of the Code is to lay down guidelines for local government employees which will help maintain and improve standards and protect employees from misunderstanding or criticism.

WHO THE CODE IS AIMED AT

The Code applies to all employees of Worcester City Council. Employees must ensure that they are aware of its contents.

1. **STANDARDS**

1.1 Local government employees are expected to display the highest possible standard of service, and where it is part of their duties, to provide appropriate advice to councillors and fellow employees with impartiality.

2. **DISCLOSURE**

2.1 It is generally accepted that open government is best. The law requires that some information is, by its nature, available to members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public, e.g. tourist information. All other information is normally confidential and must not be disclosed without the consent of senior management.

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

3. **POLITICAL NEUTRALITY**

3.1 Employees serve the authority as a whole. It follows they should serve all councillors and not just those of the controlling group, and ensure that the individual rights of all councillors are respected.

3.2 The Managing Director and Corporate Directors may, if requested, attend meetings of any political group provided that a similar facility is afforded to all political groups. Other employees should not be required to advise political groups, or be required to attend meetings of any political group,

but may if requested accompany the Managing Director or a Corporate Director attending the meeting.

- 3.3 Employees must follow every lawful expressed policy of the authority and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

4. **RELATIONSHIPS**

Employees are responsible to the authority through its senior managers. For some, their role is to give advice to councillors and senior managers and all are there to carry out the authority's work. Mutual respect between employees and councillors is essential to good local government.

4.2 **The Local Community and Service Users**

Employees should always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within that community in accordance with the policies of the authority.

4.3 **Contractors and Suppliers**

- 4.3.1 All known relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, should be made known to the appropriate manager.
- 4.3.2 Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenders, 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.

5. **APPOINTMENT AND OTHER EMPLOYMENT MATTERS**

- 5.1 Employees involved in appointments should ensure that these are made on the basis of merit. It would be unlawful for an employee to make an appointment which was based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the post. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees should not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or have a personal relationship outside work with him or her.
- 5.2 Similarly, employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a relative, partner, etc.

6. **OUTSIDE COMMITMENTS**

- 6.1 No employee may do any private work or engage in other employment which might conflict with the Council's interests. Employees above OPS3/PTA must obtain formal approval to undertake any outside

employment.

7. PERSONAL INTERESTS

- 7.1 Employees employed by the Council on JNC Conditions of Employment or in politically restricted posts shall register with the Monitoring Officer details of any financial or non financial interests which they have in accordance with the Guidance Note on Interests produced by the Monitoring Officer.
- 7.2 Where an employee who is not required to register an interest in accordance with paragraph 7.1 finds that a situation has arisen where he or she could have a conflict of interest, they should at that stage register their interests as if 7.1 applied.
- 7.3 The Monitoring Officer shall maintain a register of all the interests declared in accordance with paragraph 7.1 and 7.2. The register shall be available for inspection only by the Managing Director, the Section 151 Officer, the Head of Finance, the Head of Internal Audit Shared Service, members of the Standards Committee and external regulatory bodies such as External Auditors and the Local Government Ombudsman .
- 7.4 Employees shall ensure that any changes to their details recorded in the Register are notified to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of their occurring.

8. EQUALITY ISSUES

- 8.1 All employees should be aware of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and ensure that policies relating to equality issues as agreed by the authority are complied with in addition to the requirements of the law. The local community, customers and employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity.

9. SEPARATION OF ROLES DURING TENDERING

- 9.1 Employees involved in the tendering process and dealing with contractors should be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles within the authority. Senior employees who have both a client and contractor responsibility must be aware of the need for accountability and openness.
- 9.2 Employees in contractor or client units must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors.
- 9.3 Employees who are privy to confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors should not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.
- 9.4 Employees contemplating a management buyout should, as soon as they have formed a definite intent, inform the appropriate manager and withdraw from the contract awarding processes.
- 9.5 Employees should ensure that no special favour is shown to current or

recent former employees or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior or relevant managerial capacity.

10. GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

10.1 All employees shall act in accordance with the Guidance Note on Gifts and Hospitality for employees issued by the Monitoring Officer.

10.2 All employees shall, within 28 days of receiving or being offered gifts or hospitality with a value in excess of £25 or which cumulatively within any period of 30 days and from any source exceed £25, register such gifts or hospitality or the offer thereof with the Monitoring Officer.

10.3 The Monitoring Officer shall maintain a register of employees' gifts and hospitality which shall be available for inspection only by the Managing Director, the Section 151 Officer, the Head of Finance, the Head of Internal Audit Shared Service, members of the Standards Committee and external regulatory bodies such as External Auditors and the Local Government Ombudsman.

11. USE OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

11.1 Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner. They should strive to ensure value for money to the local community and to avoid legal challenge to the authority.

12. SPONSORSHIP - GIVING AND RECEIVING

12.1 Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a local government 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.

12.2 Where the authority wishes to sponsor an event or service neither an employee nor any partner, spouse or relative must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way without there being full disclosure to the Monitoring Officer of any such interest. Similarly, where the authority through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, employees should ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

13. BREACHES OF THE CODE

Any breach of this Code of Conduct may be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

Contacts:-

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