

CODE OF CONDUCT

INTRODUCTION

The Code covers all Council employees under a contract of employment, including office holders. Activities carried out by employees as representatives of the Council, as Members of companies or voluntary organisations are subject to this code.

STANDARDS

Local government employees are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public and where it is part of their duties to provide appropriate advice to Councillors and fellow employees to do so without partiality.

Employees are expected to perform their duties with honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity and must be accountable to the authority for their actions.

The public is entitled to expect conduct of the highest standard and public confidence in the integrity of the Council's operations would be shaken where the least suspicion to arise that an employee could in any way be influenced by improper motives. Employees will be expected to adhere to such standards and therefore to report to their immediate supervisor or their Head of Service or (if this is not appropriate) to the leader of the Council any impropriety or breach of procedure. Chief Officers and Heads of Service have an obligation to notify the Head of Financial and Asset Management immediately of all financial or accounting irregularities or suspected irregularities or of any circumstance which may suggest the possibility of irregularities including those affecting cash, stores, property, remuneration or allowances

POLITICAL NEUTRALITY

Employees serve the council as a whole and are not required to advise political groups. However upon request to the Chief Executive arrangements may be made for Chief Officers and Heads of Service so to do in a manner which does not compromise their political neutrality. One obvious mechanism to ensure that political neutrality is maintained is to offer the same facility to each political group so that the same advice should be made available to each group. In the interests of open government the most satisfactory way of arranging this is through the normal committee system. Therefore it is acknowledged by the Council that situations in which employees are asked to advise political groups will be very rare, and on such occasion only members of the Council will be in attendance in the political group.

Employees whether or not politically restricted potholders must diligently follow pursue and implement the lawful policies of the Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

RELATIONSHIPS

Employees are responsible to the Council through its senior mangers for some their role is to give advice to Councillors and senior managers and all are there to carry out the Council's work. Mutual respect between employees and Councillors is essential to good local government. Employees should be aware that close personal familiarity between employees and individual Councillors can possibly damage that relationship and can possibly prove embarrassing to other employees and Councillors.

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

APPOINTMENT AND OTHER EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

Employees involved in appointments should ensure that these are made on the basis of merit. It is unlawful for an employee to make an appointment which is 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 close personal relationship outside work with him or her.

Employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion, pay or conditions of another employee or prospective employee who is a relative or friend.

Relative is defined as a spouse, partner, parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter, child of partner, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or the spouse or partner of any of the preceding persons. Friend is defined as a person with whom the employee spends recreational time outside the work environment or actively shares a mutual interest.

OUTSIDE COMMITMENTS

Some employees have conditions of service which require them to obtain written consent to take any outside employment. Employees should not undertake outside work if their official duties overlap in some way with their proposed work, if it causes a conflict of interest or if it makes use of material to which the employee has access by virtue of his or her position (for example an architect or planner who draws up plans within the Council should not do work for an applicant for planning consent). It is irrelevant whether or not the work is paid

PERSONAL INTERESTS

Employees must declare to their Head of Service or the Chief Executive any actual or reasonably predictable conflict of a personal interest and their obligations as a Council employee (e.g. involvement with an organisation receiving grant aid from the Council, membership of a National Health Service Trust Board, involvement with an organisation or pressure group with may seek to influence the Council's policies).

An employee who is a member of any organisation must not deal with a matter which could affect that organisation or someone who is also a member of that organisation to a greater degree than a substantial number of borough residents.

The Council will make arrangements so that an employee with a conflict of interest does not deal with the matter but employees must avoid creating a situation which would interfere regularly with their ability to discharge their duties. Information obtained by the Head of Service or Chief Officer or Chief Executive under this section shall be treated as confidential so far as is possible.

SEPARATION OF ROLES DURING TENDERING

Employees in contractor or client units must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors.

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.

Employees contemplating a management buy out should as soon as they have formed a definite intent inform the Chief Executive and withdraw from any contract awarding processes.

Employees should ensure that no special favour is shown to current or recent former employees or their partners, close relatives and associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior or relevant managerial capacity.

CORRUPTION

Employees must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence for them to corruptly receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing or not doing anything or showing favour or disfavour to any person in their official capacity. The employee will have to demonstrate that any such rewards that have been received have not been corruptly obtained.

USE OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

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 within approved Council budgets and financial regulations.

HOSPITALITY

Employees should only accept offers of hospitality extended to them as an employee of the Council if there is a genuine need to impart or obtain information or represent the local authority in the community. Offers to attend purely social or sporting functions should be accepted only when these are part of the life of the local community of South Ribble or where the Council should be seen to be represented.

When hospitality has to be declined the offer or should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operating within the council.

Employees should not accept personal gifts although the Council will allow employees to keep insignificant items of token value such as pens, diaries etc., which are for use for Council purposes.

When receiving legitimate hospitality employees should be particularly sensitive as to its timing in relation to decisions which the Council may be taking affecting those providing the hospitality.

Employees who are uncertain about any matter contained in the Code should seek legal advice in the first instance from the Head of Legal Service. Such discussions will be regarded prima facie as private but if a matter of proper concern to the Council is disclosed and the employee fails to follow the advice given then the Head of Legal Service and Solicitor will be under an obligation to inform the appropriate Head of Service Chief Officer, Chief Executive or the Council.

Although this Code and the Statutory and contractual obligations of employees require that they act promptly no employee is likely to be prosecuted or penalised for failing to comply with these requirements if there has been a reasonable delay arising only from taking such advice from the Head of Legal Services.

OPENNESS

All employees must not disclose information given to them in confidence by anyone, or information acquired which they believe is of a confidential nature, without the consent of a person authorised to give it unless they are required by law.

Employees must not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law

RESPECT FOR OTHERS

All employees must treat others with respect, not discriminate unlawfully against any persons and treat members of the authority professionally.

Revised July 2005