

# OFFICER CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL

Gloucester City Council (“the Council”) adopted this code of conduct on 25 January 2024 to come into force on 26 January 2024. The Code sets out the conduct that is expected of you when acting as an Officer of Gloucester City Council and conducting council business including full-time and part time staff, permanent, temporary, casual or agency staff, secondees, work placements, apprentices and trainees.

The Code does not seek to regulate Officers’ private or personal lives, but care must be taken to ensure that nothing is done that would bring council work and private interests into conflict or bring the Officer or the Council into disrepute.

## **Purpose of this Code of Conduct**

The people of Gloucester are entitled to expect conduct of the highest standard from all the Council’s Officers. All Officers are expected to act in accordance with this Code, it forms part of the terms and conditions of employment, and failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.

The Code of Conduct is based upon the seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

## **Officer’s responsibilities**

Officers serve the whole Council and are expected to provide the same level of support for all functions of the Council.

Officers are expected to:

1. Maintain conduct of the highest standard so public confidence in their integrity and the Council as a whole is sustained
2. Ask for clarification from your line manager or the Monitoring Officer on any aspects of the Code that are not clear
3. Incorporate and promote equality in all that they do
4. Keep up to date with the latest version of the Code and follow it at all times.

### **1. Public funds**

- (1) All Officers must act with probity, financial control and honesty and adhere to arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption.
- (2) All Officers must comply with the Council’s Financial, Contract and Procurement Regulations, the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Anti Bribery Policy, Anti Money Laundering and Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policies.
- (3) Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenders and no special favour should be shown in the tendering process to businesses operated or controlled by friends, partners or relatives.

### **2. Customers**

- (1) All Officers should be courteous, efficient and impartial. Staff who work with customers who behave aggressively should familiarise themselves with the best

practise for dealing with violence and aggression and the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy.

### **3. Other Employees**

- (1) All Officers must treat colleagues, including those not directly employed by the council, with courtesy and respect, and must not abuse them verbally or physically.
- (2) Staff must not harass or bully or be insubordinate to colleagues and must comply with the standards set out in this Code in relation to equalities.
- (3) Officers who are in a partner, family or emotional relationship may at some time work together. Such personal relationships seldom interfere with work and the presumption will be that the relationship will not affect performance. However, there are situations when a personal relationship between Officers or between an Officer and Member becomes a management concern and may unintentionally impair operational efficiency or affect the integrity of service delivery. Officers must declare any personal relationship with another Officer or with a Member, where the relationship could affect, or could be perceived to affect performance.
- (4) In any situation where Officers in a personal relationship work in close proximity, the council reserves the right (without breach of contract) to require one or both Officers to change their roles or duties. In circumstances where an Officer is in a close personal relationship with a Member the council reserves the right (without breach of contract) to require the Officer to change their role or duties. This is intended to avoid the Officers in a relationship finding themselves in a potentially difficult situation and avoid perceptions of undue influence or unfairness (whether real or imagined).

### **4. Equalities**

- (1) All members of the local community, customers, Members and colleagues have a right to be treated with fairness and equity and be confident that they will not be discriminated against because of their age, gender, gender reassignment, disability, pregnancy/maternity status, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, their economic and social background, those with responsibilities as a carer, those who are married or in a civil partnership, or any other ground that cannot be shown to be justified.
- (2) All Officers must take care to do nothing that may cause them or the Council to breach any equality enactment.

### **5. Alcohol and Drugs**

- (1) All Officers will be expected to attend work without being under the influence of alcohol or drugs (used other than as prescribed) or have their work performance adversely impacted by alcohol or drugs. Any associated inappropriate behaviour or conduct may be considered misconduct and may be considered under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.
- (2) Where involvement with illegal or illicit drugs, use of prescription drugs other than as prescribed or excessive use of alcohol by an Officer takes place outside of working hours, the Council will consider the impact this may have on their employment, including consideration of any implications for the Council's reputation or public confidence.

## **6. Health and Safety**

- (1) All Officers shall comply with the Council's Health and Safety policies and procedures and must ensure that they do not act wilfully or intentionally in a manner liable to place the public, colleagues, themselves or the Council at risk.

## **7. Conflicts of Interest**

- (1) All Officers must avoid creating a conflict of interests between their private life and their public duties. The council reserves the right to bring action against an Officer where their conduct outside work conflicts with their public duties, for example where conduct outside of work could undermine the council's reputation or public confidence.
- (2) Officers who are involved with granting permissions, approvals, consents or benefits, must take no part in considering any application made by the Officer or their relative, friend or neighbour.
- (3) All staff appointments will be made on merit. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, Officers should not be involved in an appointment, either on an Appointment Panel or as a referee, if they are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship with them outside work. Officers should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline or other sanction, or in decisions relating to pay, where they are related to, or have a close personal relationship with, the Officer who is subject to that decision.
- (4) Officers must declare any financial or other interest - whether direct or indirect - in any existing or proposed contract with the Council or any other interest or association with any council activity, which could cause a potential conflict of interest. These include but are not limited to decision-making, the management of contracts and giving policy advice.
- (5) All declarations must be made in writing to the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer can also provide advice to ensure compliance with this requirement.

## **8. Arrest or Conviction on Civil or Criminal Charges**

- (1) You must, as soon as practicable, inform (and keep informed) your line manager if you are arrested, charged, convicted or sentenced for any civil or criminal offence that could result if convicted in a term of imprisonment of at least three (3) months.
- (2) In relation to traffic offences you do not need to inform your line manager of a matter unless it involves the transport of service users, involves an official vehicle or could result in a term of imprisonment of at least 6 months or a disqualification from driving.
- (3) Failure to inform will be considered an act of gross misconduct.

## **9. Secondary Employment**

- (1) Officers may undertake secondary employment such as: work on a voluntary, fee-paying or recognition-in-kind basis; or engaging in any other business; as well as secondary employment within the council itself.

- (2) Officers must obtain the express consent of the Managing Director or Head of Service prior to engaging in any other business or taking up any secondary employment. Officers must subsequently keep their line manager advised of any changes to their secondary employment.
- (3) Secondary employment outside the council must not conflict with the council's interests or bring it into disrepute. You are not permitted to undertake secondary employment during your working hours, use council property, equipment or associated documents or communications.
- (4) The Council reserves the right to take action if secondary employment is deemed to be detrimental to the interests or reputation of the council, or where it affects an Officer's work performance.
- (5) Officers may not become a trustee or board member of any organisation which receives any form of funding from the council except with the express consent of the Managing Director or Head of Service, after consultation with the Monitoring Officer.
- (6) Officers must not engage in secondary employment which is set up in competition with the Council or compete with the Council for a contract while still employed by the Council or canvass other Council Officers to induce them to join a business which is set up in competition with the Council.

## **10. Gifts, Hospitality and Inducements**

- (1) It is a criminal offence for an Officer to accept money or reward other than their proper pay.
- (2) Small gifts may only be accepted when they are low cost (less than twenty five pounds (£25)), functional items suitable for business use, rather than personal use, e.g. diaries, calendars, pens. Any other gifts should be returned officially with a suitable letter of explanation. If they cannot be returned, they should be given to the Head of Paid Service for donation to the Mayor's Charity
- (3) Visits by Officers to exhibitions, demonstrations, conferences, business meals, and social functions, in connection with their official duties shall be at the council's expense.
- (4) Hospitality, in the form of meals and drinks, offered by a third party, is only acceptable where it forms a minor part of normal business meetings/discussions held during the normal working day.
- (5) Other offers of hospitality, e.g. invitations to dinners, cultural performances, sporting events, awards ceremonies etc, should only be accepted if there is a clear and demonstrable benefit to the council, and the hospitality would not expose the council to criticism that the provider of the hospitality was achieving undue influence or creating the perception of an obligation. Attendance must have the Head of Paid Service's approval in advance and must be recorded in the register of gifts and hospitality.
- (6) Informal social contact e.g. drinks in a public house, with representatives of organisations, which supply, or hope to supply, goods or services to the council must always be avoided. Where such instances do occasionally take place, i.e. after late working, Officers should ensure that the other party does not meet the costs of such

contact in full. Officers should record such events in the register of gifts and hospitality.

- (7) The register of gifts and hospitality is held by the Monitoring Officer and is subject to regular Audit inspection.
- (8) Officers should not engage the services of contractors commissioned by the council when acquiring materials, labour or plant at cost, trade or discount prices. Whilst such an arrangement may constitute a saving it puts Officers in a compromising situation which may bring them and the council into disrepute.
- (9) Customers may seek to express their thanks to Officers by offering gifts, money etc. Officers must refuse such 'gifts' politely and explain why you cannot accept them before reporting this matter to their line manager.
- (10) The prevention, detection and reporting of bribery is the responsibility of all Officers and all staff are required to avoid any activity that might lead to, or suggest, a breach of the Bribery Act 2010.

## **11. Political Neutrality**

- (1) All Officers serve the council as a whole and not just the controlling group - and must ensure the individual rights of all councillors are respected.
- (2) All Officers must follow the lawfully expressed policies of the Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.
- (3) Officers in politically restricted posts must comply with the statutory restrictions on their political activities.
- (4) Whilst engaged in council business, Officers must not wear or display any objects indicating support for or opposition to any political party or view. This applies to private vehicles used whilst undertaking council business.

## **12. The Media**

- (1) All communications with the media relating to the activities of the council should be handled through the communications team at [communications@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:communications@gloucestershire.gov.uk).
- (2) No Officers should communicate with the media on matters relating to the activities of the council without prior authorisation from the communications team and journalists should be referred to the communications team.
- (3) Officers with ideas for positive stories about the council should contact the communications team.
- (4) Any Officer that wishes to write material for a publication which does not refer to the council but relates to their profession (e.g. an article in a professional journal), should advise their line manager before publication. The article should also contain a disclaimer, which states that the views are those of the individual and not of the council.

### **13. Use of Council Facilities and Systems**

- (1) The council's property and facilities are provided for official council business. All council owned portable equipment and devices must be returned on leaving council employment and any council-owned or supplied data must be deleted. Access to systems used for council purposes must be terminated permanently.
- (2) Any property, equipment or devices provided to Officers for business use must be used in compliance with the terms, conditions and use policies provided at the time the equipment was issued (or as they may be updated from time to time).
- (3) The council has the right to access and monitor communication systems provided to you and will monitor usage of its communication systems e.g. telephone, email and Internet access, to ensure their proper use and will run reports detailing usage levels of staff.
- (4) Systems may be accessed when the council suspects an Officer has been misusing council facilities, or, for the investigation of suspected fraud or other irregularity. In addition, where service delivery reasons exist, an Officers' senior officer, may approve access to emails when an Officer is absent. Access to facilities may be temporarily suspended whilst an investigation is on-going and may be permanently withdrawn where misuse is detected. Cases of 'misuse' may result in disciplinary action being taken - this may include dismissal.
- (5) Email and the Internet are available for work use and provisions apply as part of agile working. External email is not secure, Officers must only use work email addresses to communicate with third parties as part of their job role. Good practice guidelines for the use of council resources are available on GlosNet.
- (6) Officers are to be aware that contracts formed by email or over the Internet might be legally binding. Any contractual agreement, offer or acceptance must only be made electronically if you have explicit written authority to enter into the contract.

### **14. Social networking websites**

- (1) All Officers are encouraged to exercise discretion and use social media appropriately and have regard to their employment with the Council at all times to protect the council's operations, confidential information and reputation. Officers are expected to:-
  - (a) Avoid making any social media communications that could damage the council's business, operations or reputation, even indirectly.
  - (b) Not use social media to:
    - defame or disparage the council, staff or any third party;
    - harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against staff or third parties;
    - make false or misleading statements; or
    - impersonate colleagues or third parties
  - (c) Not express opinions on the council's behalf, unless expressly authorised to do so by your Head of Service: you may be required to undergo training in order to obtain such authorisation.
  - (d) Not post comments about sensitive council business-related topics, such as draft proposals or information belonging to any organisation (or person) with which the council works in partnership.

- (e) Not do anything to jeopardise the council's confidential information and intellectual property.
- (f) Never include our logos or other trademarks connected to the council's work in any social media posting or in your profile on any social media unless expressly authorised to do so by your Head of Service.

## **15. Handling Information**

- (1) All Officers must comply with the Data Protection legislation and the council's Data Protection Policy.
- (2) Officers may be required by law to disclose certain types of information to Members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. Information should be disclosed unless there is a good reason for not doing so.
- (3) Information which must be kept confidential includes:
  - (a) Commercially sensitive information
  - (b) Personal details of colleagues
  - (c) Reports and Minutes which are Confidential or Exempt from publication
  - (d) The council's internal documents (unless the law says that the information must be made public or as instructed by a Manager)
- (4) Officers must not reveal any information to anyone else unless they have a legal responsibility to provide it, or where the Officer, client, contractor, debtor or creditor concerned gives them written permission to do so.
- (5) Officers must not use information obtained through their council role for their personal benefit or gain, nor may they pass it on to anyone else who might use it in such a way.
- (6) All Officers should exercise reasonable judgement in communicating information, particularly information which may bring the council into disrepute or cause it harm, to any person or organisation outside the Council.

## **16. Whistleblowing**

- (1) The council does not tolerate any form of malpractice. Every Officer has an important part to play in reporting any concerns, and all staff are expected to cooperate with investigations. Although it is often difficult for Officers to report legitimate concerns through fear of victimisation or reprisal, please be assured that in raising concerns you will be supported. Please refer to the Whistleblowing policy for more information.

## **17. Compliance with the Code**

- (1) This Code is part of every Officer's contract of employment. An extract of the Code is issued to every Officer as part of their terms and conditions of employment, together with advice on how to access the full document.
- (2) Failure to comply with any of the provisions included in this Code may result in disciplinary action being taken under the Disciplinary policy, or legal action if necessary.

## 18. Additional guidance and support

- (1) This policy provides an overview of the purpose of the policy and the roles and responsibilities of those for whom it is intended. There are other documents which provide more detail and helpful guidance that should be read in conjunction with this Code and these are listed below:-

Responsibility for Functions (Scheme of Delegation - Constitution Part 3)
Financial Regulations (Constitution Part 4)
Contract Rules (Constitution Part 4)
Officer Employment Procedure Rules (Constitution Part 4)
Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations (Constitution Part 5)
Data Protection Policy (GlosNet GDPR)
Information Security Policy and Procedures (GlosNet GDPR)
Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement (GlosNet Policies and Procedures)
Ordering Goods and Paying For Them (GlosNet Procurement)
Agile Working Policy (GlosNet HR)
Disciplinary Policy (GlosNet HR)
Secondary Employment Policy (GlosNet HR)
Fairness, Diversity and Equality at Work Policies (GlosNet HR)
Gifts and Hospitality Guidance (GlosNet HR)
Safety Health and Well-being (GlosNet HR)
Whistleblowing Policy (Glosnet HR)
Code of Practice for Planning
Code of Practice for Licensing