

EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT

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We will on request produce this policy / procedure, or parts of it, in other languages and formats, in order that everyone can use and comment upon its content.

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DOCUMENT CONTROL

Changes History

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Authorisation (Responsible Owner)

Role	Name	Approval Date
Executive Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive	Stephen Meah-Sims	22 October 2024

Approval (Accountable Owner)

Role	Name	Approval Date
Assistant Director of Governance, Legal and Assurance	Nigel Inniss	20 September 2024

Reviewers (Consulted)

Role & Review Responsibilities	Name	Approval Date
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Daisy Rea	HR and Change Manager	20 September 2024

Distribution List - Once authorised (Informed)

Name	Organisation
All County Council Staff	County Council

Review Period

Date Policy to be Reviewed	By whom
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1. Statement of Intent

1.1 SCC seeks to uphold the highest standards in the way it operates. This policy sets out the standards that workers must observe. These guidelines will help to maintain and improve standards within the Council and will protect both individual workers and the Council from criticism and legal risk and costs.

2. Scope

2.1 The policy applies to all workers of the Council, including office holders such as registrars.

2.2 The standards also apply to any of our workers who are seconded out to other organisations.

2.3 The term 'workers' is deliberately used, as the policy applies to all employees, and temporary or casual workers. It is a condition of engagement that any consultants and contractors delivering services to the Council and its customers must also observe the spirit of this policy.

2.4 The policy does not apply to elected members (Councillors), or school-based workers, for whom separate policies apply.

2.5 Some roles, such as social workers, health visitors and school nurses, will have their own additional professional code of conduct, which they must adhere to as well.

3. Nolan Principles: The Seven Principles of Public Life

3.1 The Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles) apply to anyone who works as a public officeholder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, such as those in the Civil Service; local government; police; courts and probation services; public bodies; and in health, education, social and care services, and workers in other sectors who deliver public services. All public officeholders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources.

- **Selflessness**

 Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

- **Integrity**

 Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that may try inappropriately to influence them in their work.

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They should not act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

- Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

- Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

- Openness

Holders of public office 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 doing so.

- Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

- Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

3.2 More information about the Nolan principles can be found [here](#)

3.3 In addition, Suffolk County Council staff are required to demonstrate the Council's organisational values in their behaviours at work: These can be found at [Aspire Home](#)

4. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

4.1 Suffolk County Council represents all the communities it serves and seeks to be an employer of choice. All colleagues, volunteers and customers have a right to be treated with fairness, inclusion, and equality. Workers must comply with both Council policies concerning equality issues and the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

4.2 The Council expects workers to:

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- Treat each other and clients with respect and dignity, putting into practice the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Contribute to fulfilling their directorate or team's equality action plan.
- Seek to improve their own awareness and good practice on equality, diversity, and inclusion, as part of service delivery and the culture within the organisation.
- Act according to the values of the organisation – 'We-Aspire' (see link above).
- Challenge discriminatory or non-inclusive practice, behaviours, and words.
- Seek proactively to identify any barriers to services, or negative impacts affecting particular groups, and remove or mitigate them as much as possible.
- Help the Council to be an exemplar of good practice in this area.

4.3 Staff can access more information about equality and diversity [here](#).

5. Health and Safety

5.1 The Council takes its duty of care to its employees seriously. Workers must comply with any corporate or local health and safety policies and practices that apply to their work or role. Everybody has a responsibility to ensure their own safety, and the safety of colleagues or customers in their vicinity or sphere of influence. Any incidents or near misses must be reported. Risk assessments should be completed where necessary, e.g., for lone working or to assess risks to pregnant staff. Managers must care for the safety and well-being of the staff in their team.

5.2 Further information and guidance for staff about health and safety is available [here](#).

5.3 Information for staff about building security and staff responsibilities can be found [here](#).

6. Standards and Whistleblowing

6.1 Workers must give a high standard of service to the public, and provide appropriate advice and support to elected members, colleagues, or service users with impartiality. Local Government workers have a duty to provide the highest possible standard of service and ensure, where appropriate, that other workers do so also.

6.2 If a worker has any concerns about an issue in the provision of Council services, or any breach of conduct or procedures, they must bring it to the attention of their line manager (who will notify the monitoring officer). If they do not feel able to speak to their line manager, they can raise the issue with their senior manager, Head of Service or Director, depending on who they feel able to speak to. They should be able to do this without fear of reprimand or victimisation. Workers may wish to use the Council's Whistleblowing procedure.

6.3 In particular, workers should be prepared to highlight any concerns with regards to: fraud, safeguarding issues, human trafficking and modern slavery, health and safety, equality and diversity, data protection, and any other issue of legal compliance where it is felt they or other workers have acted unlawfully or their actions amount to maladministration; or where there could be serious impact on the safety or well-being of colleagues or customers, or the reputation of the Council.

6.4 The Whistleblowing Policy can be found on Suffolk County Council's website [here](#).

7. Disclosure of Information and Data Protection

7.1 Workers must not use information obtained in the course of their employment for personal or commercial gain or benefit or pass it on knowingly to others who might use it in such a way. Any personal information received from a Councillor should not be divulged by the employee without the prior approval of that Councillor, except where such disclosure is a legal requirement.

7.2 Workers who have access to any commercially sensitive, confidential, or personal information should only disclose it in the course of their work, as needed. Similarly, workers should only access and view data essential to their day-to-day tasks and not actively seek out individual or personal information. Workers should disclose to their manager if at any time personal matters may result in a conflict of interest with them when viewing the personal data of specific people.

7.3 The general position is that public service should be undertaken in an open and transparent manner. This is supported through legislation (access to information rules, data protection and freedom of information). The law requires that certain types of information should be made available to Members, Auditors, Government departments, service users and the public. Staff must adhere to the Council's policies on computer misuse and information security. Workers must have due regard to current data protection law, in respect of the way personal and special category information is stored and used. They must comply with the Acceptable Use of Information Policy and the Data Protection Policy.

7.4 Workers should attend any training sessions provided by the Council in relation to the above and seek advice when unsure from their line manager.

7.5 The Council's Acceptable Use of Information Policy can be seen [here](#):

7.6 Staff can access the Data Protection Policy [here](#):

7.7 Staff can access further guidance about data protection [here](#):

8. Political Neutrality

- 8.1 Workers serve the County Council as a whole. They must serve all elected members and not just those of the controlling group. In addition, they must ensure that the individual rights of all elected members are respected.
- 8.2 Workers may be required to advise political groups. They must do so in ways consistent with workers' political neutrality.
- 8.3 Workers must follow the lawfully expressed policies of the County Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere improperly with their work.

9. Outside Employment, Voluntary Work and Working Hours

- 9.1 All workers must obtain consent from their Line Manager and Service Lead via An Application for Additional Employment form (see Working Time Policy) before engaging in any outside work or employment that brings a gain, whether monetary or other. This includes self-employment, paid partnerships, social media paid content sharing or influencing, voluntary work and work as a member or office holder for any professional association.
- 9.2 If a manager agrees to an employee's request, the employee will be required to complete a 'Declaration of Interest Form'. Managers will assess the suitability of any secondary employment or additional roles as detailed above, in relation to an employee's working hours, ensuring there is no breach of the Working Time Regulations, as well as ensuring there are no conflicts with the employee's post at SCC, or services delivered to customers. Consideration will also be given as to whether the secondary employment or additional roles as detailed above could have the potential to bring SCC into disrepute now or in the future.
- 9.3 Requests will only be refused for business or welfare reasons, and a clear explanation will be given.
- 9.4 All workers must be clear about their contractual obligations and must not take on outside employment which conflicts with the Council's interests (see section 10).
- 9.5 Workers should be clear about their contractual obligations to gain consent for outside work as detailed above, and if, after taking such outside work, a conflict arises, they should declare this to their line manager/service lead. Consent will be required to continue undertaking that additional work from their Line Manager who may seek guidance from HR, the Monitoring Officer, or Senior Management in the Service. The Declaration of Interests Form will then be updated / recompleted.

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- 9.6 In the event that consent is given for outside work or employment, under no circumstances should any work be undertaken during working hours with the Council or with the use of Council facilities or resources. Communication methods such as telephone calls, correspondence (paper or email) or online posts relating to outside commitments are not permitted during Council time. Any such breaches will be managed under the Council's Disciplinary Procedures.
- 9.7 If the employee does have a secondary employment or additional role/s and is absent from SCC due to sickness, or disability related sickness and intend to continue with their secondary arrangements during their period of absence, the employee will need agreement from their line manager to ensure that it is appropriate to do so.
- 9.8 Further to the above, whilst off sick from SCC, secondary employment or additional roles should only be undertaken during days and hours when the employee would not ordinarily be working or expected to work for SCC.
- 9.9 Workers must adhere to the Council's rules on the ownership of intellectual property or copyright created during their employment with the Council. This could include patents, copyrights, brevets, inventions, licences, secret processes, trade designs and protections. For senior employees, these rules may be included in the terms and conditions of employment. Consent and advice about matters relating to intellectual property and copyright should be sought from the line manager, in the first instance, or from the Director or Head of Service, if needed.

10. Relationships, Personal Interests and Conflicts of Interest

Relationships

- 10.1 Councillors: Workers are responsible to the Council, although they have a general duty to act in the interests of the local community. The roles of workers and Councillors are different: Councillors are responsible to the electorate and serve elections terms of office; workers serve under a contract and are accountable to the Council and carry out the Council's work under the direction of their line managers, Committees/ Sub-Committees and Council. Some workers give advice to Councillors and senior managers in the course of their work for the Council and should do so in a balanced and professional manner. Mutual respect between workers and Councillors is essential to good local government. However, close personal familiarity between workers and individual Councillors may result in a conflict of interest and should therefore be avoided.

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- 10.2 The Public and Service Users: Workers 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 as defined by the policies of the Council.
- 10.3 Contractors: All relationships of a business or private nature with Council contractors, or potential contractors, should be made known to the appropriate manager (and where applicable, must be disclosed to the Monitoring Officer on the Register of interest form). Orders and contracts must be awarded in accordance with the Council's Procurement Regulations and Procurement legislation. 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.
- 10.4 Workers must notify their line manager and complete the Register of Interests/ Gift & Hospitality form and forward this to the Monitoring Officer if they have an interest in a contract with the Council. Workers should not be involved in any business relating to this contract (including procurement/ supervision of such a Contractor, as part of the post contract award management of the contract).

Appointment and other Employment Matters

- 10.5 Workers involved in appointments should ensure that these are made based on merit. It would be unlawful for a worker to make an appointment which was based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the post. To avoid any accusation of bias, workers should not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or with whom have a close personal relationship outside work.
- 10.6 Similarly, workers should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any employee who is a relative, partner or with whom they have a close personal relationship outside of work.

Conflicts of Interest

- 10.7 Workers must declare in writing any personal or financial interests, which could reasonably be considered to conflict with the Council's interests.
- 10.8 Conflicts of interest could include anything that might reasonably prevent, or be perceived as preventing, staff from acting with impartiality or professionalism. This may include personal relationships with customers, volunteers, or colleagues. It will most often concern family or romantic relationships, but may also concern friendships.

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- 10.9 Workers must not gain financial benefit as a result of their Council employment, outside of their salary or other payment related to their employment. This would constitute a conflict of interest, and potentially corruption (see bribery and corruption section below). Examples would include signposting customers to their own business as part of their Council work, or setting up a business that directly competes with the work undertaken at the Council, and/or improper use of Council resources.
- 10.10 Declarations must be made about membership of any organisation that is not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance, which has an element of secrecy (e.g., the Masons, some 'friendly' societies etc). Any declarations will be treated in confidence and will only be disclosed in appropriate situations.
- 10.11 If in doubt whether to disclose something, workers should take the more cautious approach and make the disclosure.
- 10.12 Declarations are made through the Disclosure of Interests Form. The line manager must be informed, as they will need to manage the conflict and may reassign work.
- 10.13 Staff can access the Disclosure of Interests Form and guidance [here](#).

11. Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management

- 11.1 Workers responsible for commissioning, procurement or contract management must comply with the Council's Procurement Regulations. They must deal fairly and impartially with current and potential contractors.
- 11.2 Workers must avoid any suggestion of impropriety when dealing with current or former workers, friends, personal or business partners, or relatives in awarding or managing contracts. Where possible, workers must remove themselves from the decision-making role in such situations.
- 11.3 Workers must ensure that there is a clear separation between client and provider roles, for example where an in-house unit is involved in a tendering exercise, or a contract with an in-house provider is being reviewed. They must ensure that there is no privileged access to information, and that specifications, evaluation models, contract terms and other documents are not biased towards or against individual providers.
- 11.4 If a worker's personal or financial interest could be perceived to prejudice a

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procurement process they are involved with, they must immediately make their line manager aware, even if they have previously declared the interest. Their line manager shall, if needed, discuss the matter with a senior procurement officer.

- 11.5 Workers who are privy to confidential information about tenders or costs must not disclose that information to any party or organisation not entitled to it.
- 11.6 As soon as workers have formed a definite intent to tender for Council work, outside of their official capacity, and are not restricted from doing so, they must advise their line manager. They must immediately withdraw from the process to award the contract. Workers who have had privileged access to information may be debarred from submitting a tender if there is no other means of ensuring fairness.
- 11.7 Workers should ensure that no special favour is shown to current or recent former workers 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.
- 11.8 The Council's Procurement Regulations can be accessed here: [Buy Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#) and here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/imported/PART-5.1-final.pdf>
- 11.9 Staff must uphold and promote the principles of the Council's Commercial Statement which can be found here: <https://suffolknet.sharepoint.com/sites/myscc/Pages/Commercial.aspx> .

12. Bribery and Corruption

- 12.1 It is a criminal offence for workers corruptly to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward, or any other advantage for doing, or not doing, anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person in their official capacity. Where an allegation is made, a disciplinary investigation will take place.
- 12.2 The general principles which govern gifts and hospitality are:
- i) offers of hospitality should only be accepted if there is a genuine need to represent the Council.
 - ii) gifts should only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.
 - iii) To determine whether a gift or hospitality is acceptable, the 'PROVEIT' test should be applied by staff and referred to their line manager if in doubt.

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Gifts

- 12.3 Any offer, gift, favour, or hospitality directed at individual workers or members should be treated with caution. This applies particularly when the organisation making the offer may be doing, or hoping to do, business with the Council.
- 12.4 All personal gifts from contractors, suppliers, applicants, organisations, and customers should be discouraged, refused, or donated to charity. The only exceptions to this are insignificant items of token value, such as pens, diaries, and calendars.

Hospitality

- 12.5 Staff should ask themselves whether members of the public, knowing the facts of the situation, could reasonably think that staff might be influenced by the hospitality offered. If the answer is yes, the hospitality should be declined.
- 12.6 Offers of hospitality should only be accepted if there is a need to impart information or represent the Council in the community. Any accepted offers must be recorded on the Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality Form, within 28 days of being made.
- 12.7 Acceptance of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where it is clear that hospitality is corporate, rather than personal, where the Council gives consent in advance and where any purchasing, planning or other decisions are not compromised. Overnight hospitality should not be accepted.
- 12.8 Where visits to inspect equipment are required, the Council should meet the costs of such visits, to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions. Visits to inspect equipment during or shortly before a procurement exercise should not be arranged if they might be seen to give an unfair advantage to a particular bidder. The worker should seek advice from a senior procurement officer.
- 12.9 This register of gifts and hospitality is open to inspection from the public and members, and copies may be provided, if a request is made, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 12.10 Staff can access the Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality Form and obtain further guidance [here](#).
- 12.11 Information is also available in the anti-bribery policy: [Fraud and corruption - Suffolk County Council](#).

13. Sponsorship

- 13.1 If an outside organisation seeks to sponsor a Council activity, the rules concerning hospitality and gifts must apply. Particular care must be taken in dealings with actual or potential contractors, or applicants for planning permission, licences, etc.
- 13.2 If the Council seeks to sponsor an outside event or service, special care must be taken to ensure that any benefit that accrues to workers, family, friends, or business partners, is fully disclosed and registered before the venture is pursued. Similarly, if the Council gives support in the community, through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, workers must ensure impartiality and avoid conflicts of interest.
- 13.3 Workers are forbidden from directly or indirectly making an offer of, or donating to any political, charitable, or not for profit organisation in the course of their employment as a way to obtain an advantage in a Council business transaction.

14. Use of Financial Resources

- 14.1 Workers must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner. They should strive to ensure value for money and to avoid any action that, by its nature, could lead to a justifiable legal challenge of the Council.
- 14.2 Staff must uphold and promote the principles of the Council's finance rules.
- 14.3 The Council's Financial Regulations document can be viewed here:

[Part-4.1-Financial-Regulations-updated \(suffolk.gov.uk\)](#)
[Finance Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#)
[Buy Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

15. Safeguarding

- 15.1 The Council provides a wide range of services and facilities and will promote the welfare and protection of children and adults at risk within all services by:
- Respecting their rights, wishes, feelings and privacy.
 - Taking seriously and responding appropriately and promptly to all concerns, incidents, and allegations.
 - Requiring organisations that the Council contracts to provide the Council with services have appropriate safeguarding procedures and training in place.
 - Not tolerating harassment of any Council employees, elected members,

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contractors, agency staff, volunteers, suppliers, consultants, or children/adults who raise concerns of abuse; and

- Seeking to prevent abuse by promoting good practice, creating a safe and healthy environment, and avoiding situations where abuse or allegations of abuse could occur.

15.2 It is expected that all workers:

- Understand the different forms of abuse as well as their roles and responsibilities under this Employee Code of Conduct and the Council's Safeguarding Policy
- Undertake the required safeguarding training.
- Know how to record and report safeguarding concerns, incidents, or allegations.

15.3 The Safeguarding policy can be found [here](#).