

Employee Code of Conduct

What is the Code of Conduct?

The Code of Conduct outlines the standards of behaviour that Telford & Wrekin, as a Cooperative Council, expects from you as an employee, as well as the Council's responsibilities as an employer towards you. It has at its core, the Council's Co-operative values and sets out the way we do things and what we stand for. The Code forms part of your overall contract of employment.

Who is the Code of Conduct for?

The Code of Conduct applies to all employees. We also require anyone acting as our agent or working on our behalf to uphold the standards set out in the Code, therefore it applies to volunteers, work experience placements, agency workers, contractors, suppliers, consultants and partners¹.

What can you expect from the Council?

As an employee, you can expect:

- ⇒ Clarity about what is expected of you at work and, where relevant, outside work
- ⇒ A safe and healthy working environment
- ⇒ Support for your rights and recognition of diversity
- ⇒ Opportunities for learning, development and support
- ⇒ Open and honest communication and involvement
- ⇒ To be treated reasonably and fairly
- ⇒ Recognition and feedback on your performance

What can the Council expect from you?

In return, the Council has the following expectations of you:

- ⇒ Commitment to the Co-operative Council's values of openness and honesty, ownership, fairness and respect and involvement
- ⇒ To carry out your role with the best interests of customers in mind
- ⇒ To protect the Council's well-earned reputation
- ⇒ To act in accordance with Council policies and procedures and terms and conditions of employment
- ⇒ To speak up promptly about any concerns you have

¹ The term employee is used in the Code to cover employees as well as all of the categories referred to in this paragraph.

Our Principles:

The following key principles should guide our decision-making, our behaviour and our actions on a daily basis.

1. Personal & Business Integrity

Integrity is central to how we deliver services and we will lead by example, as follows:

- ✓ We work for and serve the whole Council, recognising our duty as public sector employees to discharge public functions reasonably and within the law.
- ✓ We are open and honest and transparent in all we do
- ✓ We demonstrate high personal standards, treating others as we would expect to be treated ourselves, fairly and with respect.
- ✓ We never ignore or condone wrongdoing
- ✓ We are accountable for what we do and take responsibility for our actions and decisions.

a) Bribery

We do not offer or accept bribes or facilitation payments or engage in any form of corruption whether directly or through a third party. Gifts and hospitality will be operated within strict council guidelines.

b) Fraud, deception and dishonesty

We will not engage in, condone or ignore any kind of fraud, false claim, deception or dishonest behaviour or allow someone else to do this on our behalf.

c) Conflicts of Interest

We will avoid situations in which our personal circumstances could lead to a conflict of interest. Our focus is work which will lead to improvements for our community and individuals within it.

d) Political Interests

We follow every policy of the Council and will not allow our own personal or political opinions to interfere with our work. We will comply with statutory restrictions on political activity both at work and in our personal lives. We will respond to people's needs in a fair and consistent way.

e) Working with third parties

We will conduct due diligence on all prospective suppliers/agents and partners and will work with third parties whose policies and standards support ours.

f) Legality and Competition

We operate lawfully at all times encouraging fair, open and honest competition to achieve value for money and refuse to engage in practices that try to achieve an unfair competitive advantage.

Further Information:

- ❖ Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy
- ❖ Gifts & Hospitality Guidance
- ❖ Business Activities & Private Work
- ❖ Contract Procedure Rules 2013

2. Making Every Contact Count

Our sole aim as an employer is to serve the public. Without them we have no main function or purpose. Our employees are critical in achieving our ambition to 'make every contact count'.

- We will treat our customers and the community as we would want to be treated ourselves and make every contact they have with us count
- We will work together with our community, involving them in decisions which affect their lives and being prepared to listen and take on new ideas.
- We will be ambassadors for the Council when dealing with the public, acting as its eyes and ears
- We will live and breathe our values when serving the public and will be willing to go the extra mile; nothing will be too much trouble for our customers.
- We will create an environment which enables our customers to access the help and support they need not only about our own services but those of our partners as well.

Further information:

- ❖ Customer Charter
- ❖ Customer Service Strategy 2013-2015

3. Open & Honest Working Relationships:

We aim to be an organisation where we treat each other with honesty and respect and where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential. We believe that no one should be harmed as a result of any work we do.

- We select, promote, develop and reward on the basis of skills and merit and are committed to removing barriers to equal opportunity
- We will be truthful and open about decisions affecting working lives.
- We treat each other with respect and dignity and support employee's rights and diversity
- We value and respect those who work for and with us
- We are committed to providing a healthy, supportive and safe working environment

a) Health & Safety

We will not compromise the safety of anyone involved in or affected by our services and recognise that safety is the responsibility of everyone.

b) Drugs and alcohol

We will not misuse any substance before or during working hours to the extent that:

- it impairs our performance and/or
- it potentially or actually puts our own or others health or safety at risk and/or
- it adversely affects the public image of the Council

c) Equalities

We are committed to maintaining high standards of employment practice and undertake that all employees, and those who apply for employment, will be treated with fairness, respect and dignity.

d) Harassment and bullying

We will treat all colleagues and customers with respect and dignity and will not tolerate any form of harassment, discrimination, bullying or victimisation.

e) Human rights

We are committed to upholding the human rights of all those we serve, who work for us and with us.

Further Information:

- ❖ Health & Safety Policy
- ❖ Substance Misuse Policy
- ❖ Equality & Diversity Policy – Fairness for All
- ❖ Equal Opportunities Charter
- ❖ Dignity at Work
- ❖ Protocol on Member/Officer Relations {Part 5, Section 3 of The Constitution}
- ❖ Disciplinary Procedure & Disciplinary Rules
- ❖ Grievance Procedure

4. Keeping assets and data safe

When we are entrusted with personal information and Council data, we will keep it safe.

- We respect and safeguard confidential and personal information
- We will use computer systems and communication devices appropriately
- We will be transparent and honest in our communications and our dealings with our community and stakeholders
- We record all financial transactions completely, accurately and honestly.

a) Protecting Personal information

We respect individual's rights to privacy and will treat all personal information as confidential, complying with data protection and privacy laws.

b) Safeguarding confidential information

We keep confidential information safe and protect it from unauthorised disclosure whether wilful or accidental.

c) Use of IT and communications systems

We have secure IT and communications systems and use them responsibly to undertake our Council roles, with restricted personal use. We recognise that the improper use of social media sites, whether at work or in a personal capacity, can impact upon our employment relationship and responsibilities and commit to using these sites responsibly.

d) Financial controls and record keeping

We ensure that the public funds entrusted to us are used responsibly, properly and in a lawful manner. We ensure we have suitable financial controls in place and that our records and reporting processes are complete, accurate and transparent.

e) Protecting the Council's assets

We understand the value of all our assets and resources and will protect them from improper use. We will not utilise property, vehicles or other Council facilities for personal use unless authorised to do so.

f) Communications

Our communications will be timely, honest, open and without misrepresentation. All external media communications will be managed through the Corporate Communications Team.

Further Information:

- ❖ Corporate Information Security Policy
- ❖ Financial Regulations
- ❖ Media Protocol
- ❖ Social Media Policy

5. Protecting our community and environment

We are committed to operating as a sustainable organisation by caring about our people, our communities and the environment we live in. We want to protect and improve our environment for the future.

- We will operate proper and sustainable procurement policies to safeguard the environment
- We will ensure that our suppliers adopt similar environmental standards and controls
- We will be aware of our own role in promoting social responsibility and helping to keep our borough clean and safe and a borough to be proud of

Why is it important to Speak Up?

If you have any concerns that a breach of the Code of Conduct might be taking place, it is important to speak up about it. Speaking up early helps to protect you, makes investigation easier and could protect the Council's reputation. You can do this through the Council's Speak Up policy.

What if you are unsure?

We all want to do the right thing. If you are unsure about whether a course of action is right or wrong just ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I comfortable with it?** Would I be happy if my colleagues or the press knew about it? Would I be proud to tell my friends and family about it? What would a reasonable member of the public think?
- Is it in line with our values?** The Council has clear values – openness & honesty, ownership, fairness & respect and involvement. Does this action sit well with these?
- Does it seem honest?** If something seems less than totally open and above board, it probably is.
- Is it fair?** Think carefully about whether the course of action gives someone unfair advantage over others, both internally or externally
- Could it damage our reputation?** Reputations are hard earned. If you think our good reputation is at risk, seek appropriate advice.

If you are still unsure, or have any doubts, talk to someone. This could be your Line Manager, or if this is not appropriate, you can contact Human Resources or Audit & Information Governance.