

Westminster City Council Employees' Code of Conduct

31.1 Employees Code of Conduct

- This Code meets the recommendations of the Nolan Committee's report on standards in public life that all public bodies should draw up codes of conduct which cover the seven principles of public life i.e. selflessness integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.
- This Code sets out the standards of conduct that the Council expects of all its employees .
- The Code should be read in conjunction with the Council's "Code of Conduct - Employees' Handbook" which provides practical advice on following the Code in day to day work situations.
- Employees in education settings should read the code in conjunction with the "Guidance for safe working practice for the protection of children and staff in education settings" issued by the National Network of Investigation and Referral Support Co-ordinators (Department for Education and Skills) [insert link] and "Guidance about Conduct for Staff, Volunteers, Governors, etc., whose work brings them into contact with young people" issued by the National Employers' Organisation for School Teachers [insert link].
- Breaches of the Code may result in action under the Council's disciplinary code. Serious breaches of the Code may be considered to be gross misconduct.
- The Code primarily addresses the Council's expectations for the conduct of its own employees. However, the Council expects that any consultant (and their employees), contractor (and their employees), partner (and their employees), secondee and agency staff, who are engaged to carry out work or provide services on the Council's behalf, will abide by the principles of the Code as appropriate. In the event that the Code is breached, consideration will be given to terminating the contract/arrangement between the consultant/ contractor/outside organisation and the Council, and/or seeking compensation and, as appropriate, referral of the matter to the police or other relevant regulatory body.

31.2 General Principles

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all Westminster City Council employees. The role of employees is to serve the City Council in providing advice, implementing its policies, and delivering services to the local community. Employees must perform their duties to the

best of their abilities with honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity, and contribute to the maintenance of high standards in public service. Employees must at all times act (inside and outside work) in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.

31.3 Accountability

Employees work for Westminster City Council and serve the whole of that authority. They are accountable to, and owe a duty to the City Council. They must act in accordance with the principles set out in this Code, recognising the duty of all public sector employees to discharge public functions reasonably and according to the law.

31.4 Political Neutrality

City Council employee, whether or not politically restricted, must follow every lawfully expressed policy of the City Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work. Where employees are politically restricted (by reason of the post they hold, the nature of the work they do, or the salary they are paid), they must comply with any statutory restrictions on their political activities.

31.4 Relations with Members, the public and other employees

Mutual respect between City Council employees and Members is essential to good local government, and working relationships should be kept on a professional basis.

City council employees must deal with the public, Members and other employees sympathetically, efficiently, with respect and without bias.

31.5 Equality

City Council employees must comply with policies relating to equality issues, as agreed by the authority, in addition to the requirements of the law.

31.6 Stewardship

City Council employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner, and must not utilise property, vehicles or other facilities of the authority for personal use unless authorised to do so.

31.7 Personal Interests

City Council employees' private lives are their own concern but they must not allow their private interests to conflict with their public duty. They must not misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their employment to further their private interests, or the interests of others. In particular, they must comply with:

- (1) any City Council rules on the registration and declaration by employees of financial and non - financial interests; and
- (2) any City Council rules on the declaration by employees of hospitality or gifts offered to or received by them, from any person or organisation doing or seeking to do business, or otherwise benefiting or seeking to benefit from a relationship with the City Council. Employees must not accept benefits from a third party unless authorised to do so by the City Council.

31.8 Whistleblowing

In the event that a City Council employee becomes aware of activities which that employee believes to be illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent with this Code, the employee must report the matter, acting in accordance with the employee's rights under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, and with the City Council's confidential "Whistleblowing" reporting procedure designed for this purpose.

31.9 Treatment of Information

Openness in the dissemination of information and decision making is the norm in the way the City Council functions. However, certain information may be confidential or sensitive and therefore not appropriate for a wide audience. Where confidentiality is necessary to protect the privacy or other rights of individuals or bodies, information should not be released to anyone other than a Member, relevant City Council employee or other person who is entitled to receive it, or needs to have access to it for the proper discharge of their functions. Nothing in this Code can be taken as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to keep certain information confidential, or to divulge certain information.

31.10 Appointment of Staff

City Council employees involved in the recruitment and appointment of staff must ensure that appointments are made on the basis of merit. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, such employees must not be involved in any appointment, or any other decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay and conditions for any other employee, or prospective employee, to whom they are related, or with whom they have a close personal relationship outside work.

City Council employees must not provide references on behalf of the Council for employees who are relatives or friends; nor must they provide references to the Council in respect of prospective employees who are relatives or friends

Note: In paragraphs 11. and 12. –

a) "relative" means a spouse, partner, parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, step-son, stepdaughter, child of a partner, brother, sister, grandparent,

grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or the spouse or partner of any of the preceding persons; and

b) “partner” in sub-paragraph (a) above means a member of a couple who live together.

31.11 Personal financial affairs

Employees must conduct their personal financial affairs so that neither the Council nor another public body, is defrauded or is otherwise denied, the income and/or other resources to which it is entitled by law.

31.12 Health and Safety

Employees must -

a) be aware of health and safety law, which is displayed in all workplaces, and the Council’s health and safety statement

b) carry out their work in a safe and proper manner having regard at all times for their own health and safety and that of colleagues and the public

c) comply with the requirements of the Council’s sick pay scheme.

31.13 Children’s Standard

City Council employees engaged in education and other children’s services must comply with the “Westminster Standard” to ensure the best outcomes for Westminster’s children. This Standard will make sure that all staff working with children are: representative of the Westminster community, flexible, competent and confident, ready to listen to children and their carers, work in partnership with users and colleagues, and committed to safeguarding and providing the best possible service for children, as well as promoting their health and wellbeing.

31.14 Breaches of the Code

Breaches of the Code may result in action under the Council’s disciplinary code. Serious breaches of the Code may be considered to be gross misconduct.