

Employee Code of Conduct

Version Details:

Version:	2.0
Service:	People
Author:	Charlotte Jones
Review Date:	May 2021

Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to set out the standards of behaviour and conduct that South Somerset District Council expects from all of its employees. Adherence to the Code will also help to protect employees from criticism and misunderstanding. The Code also includes a number of important legal duties which apply to your employment.

At the heart of this Code of Conduct are the Council's values, which we expect all employees to demonstrate whilst working at SSDC;

- Putting the customer and community first when developing plans and services
- Supporting people and communities, enabling them to help themselves
- Being open, transparent and with greater accessibility to those that need to use Council services
- Working with partners to improve services, efficiencies, resilience and influence
- Embracing innovation and improved technology to improve customer service and access
- Empowering a confident, flexible workforce

Responsibility of Council Employees

It is the responsibility of employees to ensure that they are not placed in a position which risks, or appears to risk, conflict between their private interests and their Council duties. The public expect high standards of behaviour and conduct and all activity should prompt the question 'Is this in the public interest?' If an employee is in doubt or concerned about anything related to conduct, they should always speak to their line (People) manager.

Principles of Conduct

Employees are expected to:

1. Ensure that the interest of the public remains paramount at all times
2. Act in accordance with the Attitudes and Approaches Framework
3. Be impartial and honest in the conduct of their business
4. Use the public funds entrusted to them to the best advantage of serving our customers and communities, always ensuring value for money and in line with the Council's financial procedures
5. Avoid actions which could bring the Council into disrepute or create a conflict of interest – this includes activity outside of the working environment
6. Be fair in all decision making ensuring that justification can be provided if needed
7. Consider and declare conflicts of interest between official duties and any private business, personal relationships or other interests

8. Adhere to the Member – Officer Protocol
9. Employees are encouraged, without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service (*Please refer to the Whistleblowing policy for more information*).

The term employee/s should be taken to mean any individual/s employed by the council including those working both full time and part time on a permanent, temporary, fixed term or inward secondment basis. The Code also applies to seasonal and casual staff, agency workers and volunteers while they are engaged in carrying out duties for the council.

Any breach by an employee of any part of the Code of Conduct or the supporting policies and guidance may render the employee liable to disciplinary proceedings.

Agency workers and contractors will be managed by the engager of the contract.

Additional Information

The following points are to help guide your actions in some specific circumstances – which include some legal responsibilities which may relate to you as an individual. They are not exhaustive, and you should always speak to your line manager if you are unsure of how to act.

Training and further guidance on specific rules and procedures will be provided during the course of your employment, according to your role and you are expected to take responsibility to ensure your understanding and behaviour remains up to date. Further information is available through the weblinks and in specific policies or procedures available on the staff portal.

- **Gifts** - Gifts should be tactfully refused – if this was not possible, then the gift should be passed to your manager who will ensure that the gift is logged on the centrally recorded register where it is determined what happens to the gift (for example donated to charity).
- **Bequests** - Bequests of any value may not be accepted where this was in relation to services provided by you to a resident or customer.
- **Inducements** - Any inducement must be declined, see this link to the Local Government Act 1972 for further guidance - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/117>
- **Personal or pecuniary interests** - If you think that you or a close friend or relative have a pecuniary (financial) or personal interest (including through the membership of groups or societies) in a contract or another council matter, you should advise your manager.
- **Hospitality** – When an offer of hospitality is over and above reasonable refreshments at meetings or other events in the course of your employment then this should be viewed as a gift or a possible inducement and declined.
- **Payments** - Any payment received for work done in the Council's interest should be declared to your line (People) manager who will advise on how to process the payment.

- **Confidentiality** - You must ensure that confidential information is not released outside the confines of the relevant group either by accident or on purpose.
- **Data protection** - You must adhere to your own individual responsibilities for handling personal and sensitive data and brief yourself on the steps to take if a breach occurs. (Refer to the Staff Portal or your manager for further information).
- **Computer systems and files** - Computer systems and data files must only be accessed if you are specifically authorised to do so as defined by your role.
Computer Misuse Act 1990 -
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/18/contents>.
- **Social media** - Only appropriate use of social media which is relevant to a specific role should take place on Council owned platforms / devices. In addition the Code applies to the use of social media *outside* the working environment in relation to elected members, fellow officers and the general public.
- **Equality and Diversity** – Under the Equality Act 2010, as an employee of SSDC, you are expected to promote equality and tackle discrimination by treating people fairly, valuing differences, removing barriers that prevent people from participating fully in public life and helping everyone to realise their full potential. *Refer to the staff portal for more information.*

Note - Some of the documents referred to in this document are available through the SSDC staff portal, if you do not have access to the portal and wish to read the policies referred to please ask your line manager.