**THE CODE OF CONDUCT**



**Introduction**

The Council puts great value on the contribution every employee makes towards our work and our aims for the borough. We are committed to creating a working environment where staff are highly motivated and able to provide excellent service to the people and communities of Kensington and Chelsea. In return, the people who work with us can expect to be treated courteously and with respect by Councillors, managers, colleagues and members of the public.

This code sets out the accepted standards of behaviour for all employees. It gives a framework to help to maintain and improve standards, as well as provide clarity to everyone on what is expected of them as Council employees.

The code is not intended to replace other employment policies, procedures, regulations and departmental rules/protocols or codes of practice operating in the Council.

Neither is this a complete list of what colleagues should and should not do.

The principles of this code apply to agency workers, volunteers and contractors.

This code forms part of a contract of employment and we encourage employees to meet these standards in every aspect of the work they do on our behalf and when working with local people, communities, and partner agencies.

We expect that the people who work for us:

* deliver the highest standard of service, respecting the people and vibrant communities living within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
* work in partnership with Councillors, managers and colleagues and maintain good working relationships across service areas and team
* keep in mind the Council’s reputation, in and out of work
* understand and work in a way that follows all of the Council’s policies and procedures
* use the Council’s core values as a cornerstone for every decision, service delivered or action taken: putting communities first, integrity, respect and working together
* demonstrate our commitment to the seven guiding principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership

If at any time you are unsure about the ‘right thing to do’ you can;

* discuss the situation with your manager
* contact HR, Audit & Fraud or Legal Services for help

The Council recognises that some professionally qualified staff may be working under additional Codes of Conduct or ethical standards laid down by other professional or governing bodies. In the unlikely event of a conflict arising between this Code and an external code or requirement then the officer concerned should discuss this with their Service Director as soon as possible.

We expect all employees to operate within the law, both inside and outside of the workplace. Unlawful or criminal behaviour at work or away from work may result in disciplinary action from the Council as well as any other prosecutions made on behalf of the police or other government agency.

**Misconduct and Gross Misconduct**

If a colleague does not respect or work in a way which is in parallel with the principles of this Code of Conduct, disciplinary action may be taken.

The Council has a disciplinary procedure, which gives examples of the types of breaches of standards or behaviour considered to be misconduct which could result in disciplinary action being taken.

Some of these are so serious that they are considered gross misconduct, which if proven could result in an employee’s dismissal from the Council’s service. The Disciplinary Procedure document gives examples of gross misconduct.

**Putting Communities First in Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea**

Council services have a real impact on the quality of life of the residents and communities we serve. Their environment, health and wellbeing and quality of life can all be affected by our conduct and the way we deliver services to them.

For many of our vulnerable residents, we are often the only people they may see or talk to. Making sure that they are given a good, friendly service can help them feel more connected to their neighbourhood and not isolated from society.

Our work is often politically sensitive and open to public scrutiny. We are a public service. Our residents, other government agencies and the general public may be interested in what we do and how we do it. Our success as a local authority depends on the confidence the public has in our services and the honesty, professionalism and hard work of the people who work with us.

Our work is publicly funded. To be above suspicion, any payments or other benefits given to an employee as the result of a service they provide on our behalf, must be made through the Council. Additionally, any expenditure or costs incurred while delivering Council services must be lawful and justifiable.

Colleagues should be authentic in their commitment to public service, putting residents, service users and communities first. We have a duty to give our best, listen to people, be open, helpful and professional in everything we do for the Borough.

The public should have confidence in our services, which depends on us being considerate, responsible, sensitive and mindful of the need to respect the confidentiality of our service users. It also means treating everyone with the same respect and level of service no matter their gender, ethnicity, social status or sexuality.

The Council is committed to protecting its employees from aggressive, abusive or bullying behaviour from customers.

**Working with Councillors**

Councillors, in their role serving residents and communities within their ward and wider borough, may ask for information or assistance with issues brought to their attention by residents. This means maintaining effective working relationships with officers across the Council. In return, Councillors should show respect to employees and not use pressure or act inappropriately to influence any actions or service delivery. Any person working for the Council who feels that a Councillor is not behaving appropriately should report this to their managers immediately.

Colleagues serve the Council as a whole – and is not confined to any specific interest group or political party. Colleagues should maintain political neutrality and be impartial or without bias in their work. Close, personal relationships between Councillors and colleagues may make this difficult and any employee in this situation should discuss this with their line manager. Colleagues should never use their relationship with a Councillor to influence their decisions or actions made on behalf of the Council or for their own personal gain, inside or outside of work.

**Working for the Council and Employee’s Responsibilities**

We encourage the people who work with us to be loyal to the Council and support each other when needed. A climate of mutual trust, confidence and respect between colleagues is essential to achieving the Council’s aims and objectives, meet our performance targets, and provide the highest quality services.

Colleagues should observe and work within the agreed Council policies and procedures.

**Managing staff**

For the Council, the people we employ and the way we all work together are the key to our success. The Council wants managers to provide sound leadership, clear direction, and support in line with their team’s and individual employee needs. This includes the opportunity to support employees in developing their skills and abilities, helping them to properly fulfil their role and future career development.

**Respecting your colleagues, clients and customers**

You are required to treat all colleagues, clients and service users equally with the utmost politeness, courtesy, respect, consistency and confidentiality. (however, confidentiality will only be maintained where this does not impact on the Council’s vicarious liability) is vital.

It is never acceptable to make remarks that are ageist, homophobic, racist, sexist, disrespectful or offensive because of a person’s religion, culture, ethnicity or belittling to someone’s abilities, or intellect.

All interactions should not intend to/be used to harass, bully or discriminate against any colleague; the Council treats complaints of harassment or bullying very seriously. Bullying and/or harassment will not be tolerated towards any person working for us or using our services.

**Working honestly**

Colleagues should always use public money and resources with complete honesty. This includes our interactions with service users , colleagues and suppliers.

It also means avoiding corruption and/or the suspicion of it, neither accepting or seeking bribes, rewards or favours of any sort apart from your pay.

Colleagues who fraudulently claim or issue housing benefit, or any other benefit from the Council, or any administered by the Department of Work and Pensions or Inland Revenue will not be tolerated.

**Working with sensitive information**

Colleagues should always use sensitive information properly and securely, respecting the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information.

The Council is required to make appropriate information available to Councillors, internal and external auditors, government departments, service users and the general public. Information gathered while working for the Council should not be used for pecuniary or personal gain or be otherwise misused.

Colleagues should avoid discussing sensitive information in public places, and never gossip about or misuse sensitive information about the Council or service users.

Outside regulations (eg GDPR) which govern our use of information and the retention/storage of it should be unwaveringly observed. IT equipment (EG laptops and mobile phones) should be taken care of when colleagues are in possession of them away from Council buildings.

**Working with integrity**

There should be no valid reason to suspect that any employees are using Council resources for private gain. The relationships that the Council has with its partners, contractors, consultants, community groups, suppliers and others must be responsibly managed to ensure there can be no suspicion of corruption or dishonesty with public money.

The Council has procured contracts for services and goods which help us deliver value for money and efficiency in services to our residents. Colleagues should make use of those corporate contracts in the first instance for any purchases of goods or services.

Any potential conflicts of interest or relationships which might appear to improperly influence a decision about the procurement or use of services should always be immediately declared with their manager.

Without good cause, colleagues should refrain from wilfully withholding any payments owed to the Council such as rent or Council tax, or salary/wages overpayment.

Colleagues should consider when they are away from work, any adverse/inappropriate behaviour might damage public confidence in the Council or in their perception of the work that you do. This includes the use of social media.

Colleagues should inform their manager if they are charged with or convicted of a crime

**Working with the media**

The Council recognises that we are all ambassadors of the Council, however we ask that employees respect our media protocol with all press and media enquiries being directed through the Communications Team. This includes requests for official statements or opinions from the Council on any issue or topic affecting residents or our service delivery. This protocol protects individual employees from unwanted media attention and allows the Council to properly manage its reputation. Relations with the media require specific skills and expertise and colleagues should obtain permission prior to discussing Council business with the press.

**Applying for a job with Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea**

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is committed to a fair and open approach to recruitment and selection. Appointments are made without bias and on the basis of the candidate’s ability and suitability for the job. Recruiting managers are required to be open and honest, alerting their line manager, if any of the candidates are known to them.

There is an expectation that candidates will complete their applications honestly and truthfully.

**Whistleblowing**

If an employee becomes aware of activities which he/she believes to be illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent with this Code, the employee should report the matter, acting in accordance with the employee's rights under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, and with the Council's confidential reporting procedure, or any other procedure designed for this purpose