

Thame Town Council

Officer Code of Conduct

1. Context

- 1.1 This Code sets out the standards which are expected of all employees (Officers), under contract of employment with the Council and includes permanent, temporary, part-time, casual and agency staff.

2. Standards

- 2.1 All employees are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public, and where it is part of their duties, to provide appropriate advice to Councillors and fellow Officers with impartiality.
- 2.2 Employees must always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial delivery of services to all groups and people within the community according to the Council's policies. Officers, in performing their duties must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity.
- 2.3 Employees must not divulge to any person (other than another member of staff or member of the Council that requires the information for the performance of their duties), any information which has been obtained by reason of their employment, except where that information is in the public domain as stipulated in the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 2.4 No member of staff shall divulge personal information regarding any employee, person or contractor, having dealings with the Council and information relating to tenders or other such issues as stipulated in the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 2.5 Whilst Officers are encouraged to be open to the press, the press should only be provided with information which normally would be available to the public. If an employee has any doubt as to whether information can be disclosed, they should seek prior approval from the Town Clerk.

3. Relations

- 3.1 Employees serve the Council as a whole and must ensure the individual rights of all elected Members are respected. Whether or not employees are politically restricted by law, they must follow the lawfully expressed policies of the Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.
- 3.2 Mutual respect between Officers and Councillors is essential. It is therefore vital that all Officers conduct themselves in an exemplary manner in all aspects of their work, in particular:

- Working relationships should always be kept on a professional basis
- Personal familiarity with individual members is to be avoided
- Members and other staff should be dealt with sympathetically, efficiently, with courtesy and without bias.

4. Standing Orders

- 4.1 Whilst Officers may not use Standing Orders in their day-to-day work, they should be aware that it is a useful reference for all matters relating to the composition of the Council, rules about Members, committee meetings, financial and procurement procedures and other issues of relevance to Officers.
- 4.2 All Officers involved in financial activities and transactions on behalf of the Council, including budgetary control, payment of accounts, payments of salaries, petty cash, and orders for works, must follow the Council's Financial Regulations.

5. Fraud and Corruption

- 5.1 Employees will be made aware that it is a serious criminal offence under the Bribery Act 2010 and the Prevention of Corruption Act 2018 to receive or give any gift, loan or reward or advantage in their official capacity "for doing" or "not doing", or "showing favour or disfavor to any person". All relationships of a personal or business nature with external contractors or suppliers, or potential contractors and suppliers, must be declared to the Town Clerk at the earliest opportunity. If an allegation is made it is for the Officer to demonstrate that any such rewards have not been corruptly obtained.
- 5.2 For an employee's own protection, if anyone makes an approach or might seem to a third party, to be trying to obtain some form of preferential treatment, or there are any suspicious circumstances in connection with a contract, they must report the matter to the Town Clerk.

6. Gifts and Hospitality

- 6.1 All gifts and hospitality should be tactfully refused. In some situations, occasional small gifts or hospitality under £50 in value may be permitted unless this gives the impression of influence or reward. Officers cannot accept any gift or hospitality over £50 in value without first obtaining the consent of the Town Clerk and then recording it in the Gifts and Hospitality Register.

7. Council Resources

- 7.1 The Council is responsible for the efficient use of the public resources it controls. Officers must not use Council premises, property, vehicles, time or other resources for anything other than Council work unless authorised to do so.

- 7.2 Employees using computers as part of their duties should make themselves familiar with the rules relating to personal use of equipment, the prohibitions on accessing or downloading racist, sexist, pornographic or violent websites or material, virus protection and the use of unapproved software.
- 7.3 Incoming personal telephone calls are allowed only in the case of emergency and outgoing calls can only be made with the prior permission of the Line Manager.
- 7.4 Personal use of e-mail is not allowed, and the Internet may only be accessed for personal use during the lunch break and not in working hours.
- 7.5 All creative designs, writings, drawings, and inventions produced which are directly related to an employee's work with the Council remains the property of the Council.
- 7.6 Employees are required to consider sustainability issues when undertaking their duties, including the procurement of goods and services. Employees should seek opportunities to improve and promote energy conservation, advocate recycling and waste minimisation, reduce pollution and support positive initiatives to improve the environment.

8. Concerns

- 8.1 The Council is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. If an employee has any concerns arising from their employment contract or employment in general, they should follow the Council's Grievance Procedure.
- 8.2 Any concerns about other aspects of the operation of the Council, such as illegal, improper, unethical behavior or anything else that is inconsistent with this Code, Council policies and procedures or Standing Orders, an employee should follow the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013.

9. Leaving

- 9.1 After leaving the Council ex-employees still have a duty not to disclose personal data relating to others or exempt/confidential information that has been acquired while working for the Council.

10. Review

- 10.1 The Council will keep this policy under review and will make changes as deemed appropriate following consultation with Officers.

Any breaches of these instructions may lead to disciplinary action that could lead to dismissal.