

OFFICER EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURE RULES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

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PART 1
EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURE RULES

1. Purpose

- 1.1 These procedure rules are to be applied with reference to the relevant sections of Part 9 of the Constitution – Responsibility for Functions – which details the responsibilities delegated to the Staffing Committee, Senior Office Appointments Panel, Employment Appeals Panels and officers.

2. Definition of Chief Officer

- 2.1 For the purpose of these procedure rules, the term “Chief Officer” means any Strategic Director, Assistant Chief Executive or Assistant Director.

3. Attempts to Influence an Appointment

- 3.1 Candidates for any appointment will be disqualified if they directly or indirectly canvass members.
- 3.2 A member of Council shall not provide a reference for any candidate for appointment to the employment of the Council and must not in any way seek to influence improperly the choice of candidate for any appointment.
- 3.3 An officer who has agreed to act as a referee for a candidate may not take part in the recruitment process.

4. Candidates Related to Members or Officers

- 4.1 Candidates for any appointment with the Council must state in their application if a member or Senior Officer is a relative. Anyone who fails to do this will be disqualified, or if appointed, liable to instant dismissal on grounds of gross misconduct.
- 4.2 Members and Senior Officers must inform the appropriate Strategic Director, Assistant Chief Executive, Deputy Director, or Assistant Director if they know that any candidate is related to them. The Strategic Director, Assistant Chief Executive, Deputy Director or Assistant Director must ensure that the appointing body is made aware of the relationship.
- 4.3 Members and Senior Officers must inform the appropriate Strategic Director, Assistant Chief Executive, Deputy Director or Assistant Director in writing if they know that a relative is appointed. The Strategic Director will inform the Monitoring Officer who will record the appointment.
- 4.4 All candidates must be made aware of the Rules contained in paragraph 4.

4.5 For the purposes of these Rules:

4.5.1 "Relative" means spouse, partner, parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, stepson, step-daughter, child of a partner, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or the spouse or partner of any of the preceding persons.

4.5.2 "Partner" in paragraph 4.5.1 above means a member of a couple who live together.

5 Appointments to Chief Officer Posts – Chief Executive

5.1 Where there is a vacancy in the post of Chief Executive, the Staffing Committee will decide how the post will be filled, including on what terms and conditions, advertising, short listing and interviewing will be undertaken. It will then refer the process to the Senior Officer Appointments Panel.

5.2 The Senior Officer Appointments Panel membership will have undertaken appropriate training in respect of recruitment and selection and will comprise:-

- Leader of the Council
- Deputy Leader of the Council
- Relevant Cabinet Member(s)
- Leader of the Majority Opposition Group
- Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
- Other members to be determined by the Leader of the Council, in order to achieve a representative composition reflecting the diversity of the Council.

5.3 Where the Senior Officer Appointments Panel decides that the appointment will not be made exclusively from among the Council's existing officers, the panel shall:

5.3.1 Draw up a statement specifying the duties of the post and any qualifications or qualities to be sought in the person to be appointed.

5.3.2 Make arrangements for the post to be advertised in such a way as is likely to bring it to the attention of persons who are qualified to apply for it.

5.3.3 Make arrangements for a copy of the statement in paragraph 5.3.1 above to be sent to any person on request.

5.3.4 Where a post has been advertised, the appointment panel shall either interview all qualified applicants for the post or select a shortlist of qualified applicants and interview those included on the shortlist.

- 5.4 Where the Senior Officer Appointments Panel has selected a candidate for appointment they must notify the proper officer of the name of that candidate together with any other relevant details.
- 5.5 The proper officer will send the information under paragraph 5.4 to every member of the Executive and will inform them of the timescale during which any objection to the proposed offer of appointment should be made to the Leader of Council.
- 5.6 The Council must approve the appointment of the Chief Executive. The Panel's recommendation for appointment will not be referred to the Council for a decision until one of the following is satisfied:
- 5.6.1 The Leader of Council has notified the appointment panel within the specified timescale that no member of the Executive has objected to the proposed offer of appointment.
- 5.6.2 The proper officer has notified the appointment panel that s/he has received no objection from the Leader of Council within that specified timescale, or
- 5.6.3 The appointment panel is satisfied that any objection received from the Leader of Council within the specified timescale is not material or well founded.
- 5.7 Full Council must also approve any salary package, as defined in the Council's Pay Policy Statement, of £100,000 per annum or more before it is offered in respect of a new appointment.
- 5.8 Where no qualified person has applied or where the panel is unable to make a recommendation for appointment the panel shall make further arrangements for advertisement in accordance with paragraph 5.3.2 above.

6 Appointments to Newly Created Chief Officer Posts

- 6.1 If there is proposal for a new chief officer post, other than that of Chief Executive, the Staffing Committee will decide whether to fill the post. If the Committee decides not to fill the post, it must determine how the duties of the post are to be carried out.
- 6.2 If the Staffing Committee decides to fill the post, the Committee must refer the process to the Senior Officer Appointments Panel to make the appointment or delegate the power to make the appointment to the Chief Executive, or her/his nominee. Either the Senior Officer Appointments Panel, the Chief Executive, or her/his nominee, as the case may be, shall have full delegated powers to decide how the post will be filled, including on what terms and conditions, advertising, short listing and interviewing.

- 6.3 All chief officer posts within the existing establishment are delegated as defined in Appendix 9 – Responsibility of Functions, but will be subject to being appointed by the Senior Officer Appointments Panel.
- 6.4 The Senior Officer Appointments Panel will have undertaken appropriate training in respect of recruitment and selection and will comprise:-
- Leader of the Council
 - Deputy Leader of the Council
 - Relevant Cabinet Member(s)
 - Leader of the Majority Opposition Group
 - Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
 - Other members to be determined by the Leader of the Council, in order to achieve a representative composition reflecting the diversity of the Council.
- 6.5 Where the Senior Officer Appointments Panel, the Chief Executive or her/his nominee, decide that the appointment will not be made exclusively from among the Council's existing officers, the Senior Officer Appointments Panel, Chief Executive or her/his nominee shall:
- 6.5.1 Draw up a statement specifying the duties of the post and any qualifications or qualities to be sought in the person to be appointed.
- 6.5.2 Make arrangements for the post to be advertised in such a way as is likely to bring it to the attention of persons who are qualified to apply for it.
- 6.5.3 Make arrangements for a copy of the statement in paragraph 6.4.1 above to be sent to any person on request.
- 6.5.4 Where a post has been advertised, the Senior Officer Appointments Panel, the Chief Executive or her/his nominee, shall either interview all qualified applicants for the post or select a shortlist of qualified applicants and interview those included on the shortlist.
- 6.6 Where the Senior Officer Appointments Panel, Chief Executive or her/his nominee, has selected a candidate for appointment they must notify the proper officer of the name of that candidate together with any other relevant details.
- 6.7 The proper officer will send the information provided under Paragraph 6.5 to every member of the Executive and will inform them of the timescale during which any objection to the proposed offer of appointment should be made to the Leader of Council.
- 6.8 No offer of appointment shall be made by the Senior Officer Appointments Panel, Chief Executive or her/his nominee, as the case may be, until one of the following is satisfied:

- 6.8.1 The Leader of Council has notified the Senior Officer Appointments Panel or Chief Executive or her/his nominee within the specified timescale that no member of the Executive has objected to the proposed offer of appointment.
- 6.8.2 The proper officer has notified the Senior Officer Appointments Panel, Chief Executive or her/his nominee, that s/he has received no objection from the Leader of Council within that specified timescale, or
- 6.8.3 The Senior Officer Appointments Panel, Chief Executive or her/his nominee, is satisfied that any objection received from the Leader of Council within the specified timescale is not material or well founded.
- 6.9 Full Council must approve any salary package, as defined in the Council's Pay Policy Statement, of £100,000 per annum or more before it is offered in respect of a new appointment.
- 6.10 Where no qualified person has applied, or where the Senior Officer Appointments Panel, Chief Executive or her/his nominee, is unable to make an appointment from the candidates that have been interviewed, the Senior Officer Appointments Panel, Chief Executive or her/his nominee, shall make further arrangements for advertisement in accordance with Paragraph 6.4.2 above.
- 6.11 The provisions detailed in paragraphs 6.1 to 6.9 above do not apply where an interim appointment is to be made exclusively from among the Council's existing officers, and where that interim appointment is for a period not exceeding 6 months duration.

7. Appointments to Other Officer Posts

- 7.1 The appointment of officers below Chief Officer is the responsibility of the Chief Executive or her/his nominee, and members may not make or be involved in such appointments.

8. Disciplinary Procedures - The Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service), Monitoring Officer, and Chief Finance Officer

- 8.1 For the purpose of these procedures, disciplinary action has the meaning set out in the Local Authorities (Standing Order)(England)(Regulations) 2001 (as amended), namely: "any action occasioned by alleged misconduct which, if proved, would, according to the usual practice of the authority, be recorded on the member of staff's personal file, and includes any proposal for dismissal of a member of staff for any reason other than redundancy, permanent ill health, or infirmity of mind or body, but does not include failure to renew a contract of employment for a fixed term unless the authority has undertaken to renew such a contract".

- 8.2 The Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer or Chief Finance Officer (referred to below in each case as the “relevant statutory officer”) may be suspended on full pay for the purpose of investigating alleged misconduct by her/him.
- 8.3 Subject to the provisions set out below, the Chief Officer Disciplinary Committee may take disciplinary action short of dismissal against a relevant statutory officer or recommend to full Council that a relevant statutory officer be dismissed for disciplinary action as defined in paragraph 8.1 above.
- 8.4 Where a potential disciplinary matter in respect of the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer or the Chief Finance Officer arises, the steps to be taken under the disciplinary procedure may be summarised as follows:
- 8.4.1 A preliminary investigation will be carried out by a group of not fewer than three elected members appointed by the Leader of Council.
- 8.4.2 If the preliminary investigation shows there is a case to answer, a full investigation will be set up and heard by the Chief Officer Disciplinary Committee.
- 8.4.3 Where, following the full investigation and hearing, the Chief Officer Disciplinary Committee considers that dismissal is the appropriate course of action in respect of a relevant statutory officer they must notify the proper officer giving particulars, in addition to the person’s name, that are relevant to the proposed dismissal.
- 8.4.4 The proper officer will send that information, including the person’s name, to every member of the Executive and will inform them of the timescale during which any objection to the proposed dismissal should be made by the Leader of Council, on behalf of the Executive, to the proper officer.
- 8.5 The Chief Officer Disciplinary Committee must include at least one member of the Executive. Where dismissal is to be considered, the Chief Officer Disciplinary Committee must also include two Independent Persons appointed in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.
- 8.6 Only full Council can approve the dismissal of the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, or Chief Finance Officer, and must do so before notice of dismissal (if required) is given. The Chief Officer Disciplinary Committee’s recommendation for dismissal will not be referred to Council for a decision until one of the following is satisfied:
- 8.6.1 The Leader of Council has notified the Committee within the specified timescale that neither s/he nor any other member of the Executive has objected to the proposed dismissal,

- 8.6.2 The proper officer has notified the Committee that s/he has received no objection from the Leader of Council within that timescale, or
- 8.6.3 The Committee is satisfied that any objection received from the Leader of Council within the specified timescale is not material or well founded.
- 8.7 Where the proposed dismissal is for disciplinary action as defined in paragraph 8.1 above, Council must take into account, in particular:
- (a) any advice, views or recommendations of the Chief Officer Disciplinary Committee. The advice, views or recommendations of the Independent Persons on that Committee to be separately detailed;
 - (b) the conclusions of any investigation into the proposed dismissal; and
 - (c) any representations from the relevant statutory officer before the taking of a vote at the meeting on whether or not to approve such a dismissal.
- 8.8 The Chief Officer Disciplinary Committee must be appointed by the Authority at least 20 days before the relevant meeting and must include two Independent Persons.
- 8.9 In relation to action short of dismissal, the relevant statutory officer has a right of appeal to Staffing Committee. There is no right of appeal beyond this level.

Disciplinary Procedures - Other Chief Officers, Deputy Directors, and Assistant Directors

- 8.10 Where a potential disciplinary matter arises which concerns a Strategic Director, Assistant Chief Executive, Deputy Director, or Assistant Director (referred to below in each case as the “relevant officer”), other than the Monitoring Officer or Chief Finance Officer the disciplinary procedures contained in the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) Agreement for Chief Officers will apply.
- 8.11 Subject to the provisions set out below, the Chief Officer Disciplinary Committee may dismiss for disciplinary action as defined in paragraph 8.1 above or take disciplinary action short of dismissal against Strategic Directors, Assistant Chief Executive, Deputy Directors or Assistant Directors.
- 8.12 Where a potential disciplinary matter in respect of a relevant officer (other than the Monitoring Officer or Chief Finance Officer) arises, the steps to be taken under the disciplinary procedures are:
- 8.12.1 When the matter involves a Strategic Director or the Assistant Chief Executive, the Chief Executive will undertake a preliminary investigation of the complaint. The preliminary investigation may in certain circumstances, including the prior involvement in the matter by the Chief Executive, be undertaken by another Chief Officer or by not

fewer than two elected members. Where the matter involves a Deputy Director or Assistant Director, the Strategic Director or Assistant Chief Executive will undertake a preliminary investigation of the complaint. This preliminary investigation may in certain circumstances, including the prior involvement in the matter by a Strategic Director, be undertaken by the Chief Executive, another Chief Officer or by not fewer than two elected members.

8.12.2 Unless the decision on the preliminary investigation is either that the complaint does not warrant a full investigation, or, if established, could be resolved informally, for example, through an unrecorded informal warning, the matter will be referred to the Chief Officer Disciplinary Committee, acting as the Investigating Committee under the JNC Agreement for Chief Officers. The Committee must include at least one member of the Executive and will have full delegated powers to act.

8.12.3 The employee will have a right of appeal against any disciplinary action to the Employment Appeals Panel, whose terms of reference are set out in Appendix 9 – Responsibility for Functions. There is no right of appeal beyond this level.

8.13 Where the Chief Officer Disciplinary Committee considers that dismissal is the appropriate course of action they must notify the proper officer giving particulars, in addition to the person's name, that are relevant to the proposed dismissal.

8.14 The Proper Officer will send that information, including the person's name, to every member of the Executive and will inform them of the timescale during which any objection to the proposed dismissal should be made by the Leader of the Council, on behalf of the Executive, to the proper officer.

8.15 The Committee must not give notice of the dismissal until one of the following is satisfied:

8.15.1 The Leader of Council has notified the Committee within the specified timescale that neither s/he nor any other member of the Executive has objected to the proposed dismissal,

8.15.2 The proper officer has notified the Committee that s/he has received no objection from the Leader of Council within that timescale, or

8.15.3 The Committee is satisfied that any objection received from the Leader of Council within the specified timescale is not material or well founded.

9. Dismissal other than for Disciplinary Action (for example dismissal by reason of redundancy) - The Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, and Chief Finance Officer

- 9.1 Only full Council can approve the dismissal of the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, or Chief Finance Officer (“relevant statutory officers”) and must do so before notice of dismissal is given.
- 9.2 Where the Staffing Committee considers that dismissal is the appropriate course of action in respect of a relevant statutory officer, they must notify the proper officer giving particulars, in addition to the person’s name, that are relevant to the proposed dismissal.
- 9.3 The proper officer will send that information including the person’s name, to every member of the Executive and will inform them of the timescale during which any objection to the proposed dismissal should be made by the Leader of Council on behalf of the Executive, to the proper officer.
- 9.4 The Staffing Committee’s recommendation for dismissal will not be referred to Council for a decision until either paragraph 8.6.1 or 8.6.2 or 8.6.3 is satisfied.

Dismissal other than for Disciplinary Action (for example dismissal by reason of redundancy) - Other Chief Officers, Deputy Directors, and Assistant Directors (“relevant officers”)

- 9.5 Where the Staffing Committee considers that dismissal is the appropriate course of action in respect of a relevant officer, they must notify the proper officer giving the particulars in addition to the person’s name that are relevant to the proposed dismissal.
- 9.6 The proper officer will send that information, including the person’s name, to every member of the Executive and will inform them of the timescale during which any objection to the proposed dismissal should be made by the Leader of the Council, on behalf of the Executive, to the proper officer.
- 9.7 The Committee must not give notice of the dismissal until one of the following is satisfied:
 - 9.7.1 The Leader of Council has notified the Committee within the specified timescale that neither s/he nor any other member of the Executive has objected to the proposed dismissal,
 - 9.7.2 The proper officer has notified the Committee that s/he has received no objection from the Leader of Council within that timescale, or
 - 9.7.3 The Committee is satisfied that any objection received from the Leader of Council within the specified timescale is not material or well founded.

PART 2 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR OFFICERS

Introduction

This Code of Conduct for Employees is based on key principles arising from the work of the Nolan Committee on standards in public life; it outlines the minimum standards that all Council employees, casual workers, agency staff, contractors and volunteers must adhere to.

The purpose of this code is to promote consistency and make all employees aware of their responsibilities whilst engaged in work for the Council, by specifying standards of behaviour and by clearly defining rules concerning official conduct.

Employees must comply with this Code as it forms part of their terms and conditions of employment. Some directorates e.g. Adult Social Services also issue supplementary codes of practice on employee conduct. These and the Council's security policies and codes of practice must also be complied with.

The Council believes that employees are responsible for their actions. It is the responsibility of employees to read the Code. If any of the provisions contained within this Code of Conduct and related codes of practice are not fully understood employees must, in their own interests, seek clarification from their Manager or Human Resources Managers. Managers should take in to account the translation and interpretation needs of the individual. This Code can be made available in other languages and formats on request.

In instances which do not clearly fall within the guidance of this code and following discussion between a Strategic Director, the Assistant Chief Executive and the Assistant Director of Legal Services, individual cases will be referred to the Standards Committee for consideration.

Failure to observe this Code of Conduct, failure to properly perform employee duties, serious misconduct or criminal offences committed during or outside working hours which could bring the Council into disrepute may result in disciplinary action being considered, including the possibility of dismissal.

10. Standards

10.1 General

The Citizens of Rotherham expect the highest standards of behaviour and customer care from Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council employees. Public confidence in employees' integrity would be shaken by the least suspicion that they could be influenced by improper motives. Employees must not put themselves in a position where their honesty or integrity could be called into question. Employees should be aware at all times about the potential for public perception to be different to their own and avoid placing themselves at risk of allegation of wrongdoing at all times.

10.1.2 The Council reserves the right to monitor its employees, including surveillance, in accordance with Council Policy and the law to ensure that the provisions of this Code of Conduct are adhered to.

10.1.3 Employees will be expected, without fear of recrimination, to bring attention to the appropriate level of management, concerns about how Council resources and services are managed or provided. The Council operates a Confidential Reporting Code and employees must report to the appropriate manager any impropriety or breach of procedure.

10.1.4 Other general standards of conduct are set out in the Council's disciplinary procedure and summarised below. The standards of conduct and behaviour are intended to promote fair and consistent treatment of individuals, apply to all employees of the Council and will be regarded as part of each employee's contract of employment.

10.2 Attendance

All employees are expected to attend regularly and punctually, not to absent themselves from duty without permission and to perform their duties in a manner, which combines prompt and efficient service with a concern for the feeling of others, including colleagues, managers and members of the public.

10.3 Health and Safety

In respect of Health and Safety all policies and procedures must be observed at all times. All employees are reminded that the Council operates a no smoking policy, in all of its premises. Staff who absent themselves from work during their working hours to smoke outside public buildings will be subject to the disciplinary procedure.

10.4 Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment

Employees must conduct themselves in accordance with the Council's Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy. Employees should not themselves discriminate, induce or attempt to induce, other employees to discriminate and

should not harass, abuse or intimidate other employees on grounds or gender, marital status, age, race, disability, sexuality or religion.

10.4.1 All employees have a responsibility to discourage any forms of bullying and harassment whatsoever. Sexist or racist language or behaviour, for example, is wholly unacceptable.

10.4.2 All members of the local community, customers and other employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity. Employees should ensure that policies and practices relating to equality issues, as agreed by the Council, are complied with in addition to the requirements of the law.

10.5 Performance

The Council expects its employees to carry out all reasonable duties and instructions, given by Supervisors and Managers, efficiently and to the required standard. If employees are in any doubt about required standards of performance they should raise the matters with their Supervisor/Line Manager at the earliest opportunity. Managers are expected to discuss performance standards as part of the probationary review process and subsequently in one-to-one supervision sessions or at performance and development reviews. Except in the case of probationary employees, capability issues will be dealt with under the Council's capability procedure.

10.6 Sickness

In respect of sickness all employees must comply with the notification requirements and complete self-certification forms on their return to work. Unauthorised absence or repeated short absences will be investigated and may lead to disciplinary action.

10.7 Gross Misconduct

Certain actions constitute gross misconduct and will result in summary dismissal unless mitigating circumstances are accepted. Set out below are examples of such conduct which in the Council's view may constitute gross misconduct. This list is purely illustrative and not exhaustive.

- Dishonesty, including theft or fraud. (Examples may include falsification of timesheets, bonus sheets, claims for reimbursement of expenditure or failure to declare information/earnings in respect of benefit claims/grant applications made to the Authority);
- Violent or threatening behaviour (Including bullying or intimidating behaviour);
- Breaches of the Council's Health and Safety at work rules and procedures which cause (or could cause) unacceptable loss, damage or injury;
- Breach of Confidence and Trust - including breaches of professional protocol and ethics;
- Negligence, including dereliction of duty;

- Willful damage to property or equipment;
- Willful breach of confidentiality;
- Refusal to carry out duties or reasonable instructions;
- Corruption and the receipt of gifts as inducements or reward (see sections 14 and 15);
- Criminal offences (whether committed during or outside the employees hours of work for the Council) which have employment implications;
- Unfitness for duty through alcohol or misuse of drugs. (Any such occurrence to be considered in the light of the Council's substance misuse policy).
- Discrimination or harassment on the grounds of sex, race, disability, age, religion or sexuality.
- Inappropriate use of internet and or the internal e-mail system.

11. Disclosure of Information

- 11.1 The law requires that certain types of information must be available to members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. The authority itself may decide to open other types of information. Employees must be aware of which information within their authority is open and which is not, and act accordingly.
- 11.2 Confidential, personal or financial information about any employee, such as salary details, must not be disclosed to any unauthorised person, or normally, to any external organisation/agency, without the express approval of the person concerned.
- 11.3 Where the request relates to references, arising as a consequence of job applications, applications for mortgages, etc, these may be issued only after verifying the identity of the enquirer either by replying in writing or in case of telephone enquiries, by telephoning the person/organisation back. However, in the case of references relating to job applications for colleagues or ex-Council employees, Council employees can only act in a personal capacity. Only the applicant's line manager can provide employment references. Any misrepresentation of the Council will be treated as misconduct.
- 11.4 Employees should not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way.
- 11.5 Employees may be personally prosecuted for offences under the Data Protection legislation. If any employee is in doubt about their responsibilities, they must consult their manager or the Monitoring Officer. The Council also has a Data Protection and Information Security Officer who can help.

12. Communications with the Media

- 12.1 It is Council Policy that all media liaison relating to Council activities is handled by the Communications Team in conjunction with Directors and Strategic Directors. If an employee has ideas for positive stories about the

Council's policies or activities or is approached by a journalist who is unaware of, or avoiding, the Council's procedures, the approval of the Head of Communications must be obtained before any information is given verbally, via e-mail or in writing.

- 12.2 Where an employee is writing material for publication which does not refer specifically to the Council, but does relate to his/her profession/occupation e.g. articles in professional journals, the employee should notify his/her Director prior to publication.
- 12.3 Employees are expected to raise any concerns, including concerns of a critical nature within the Council, directly with Line Managers or within Employee Forums. Public comments of a critical nature which undermine the Council or bring the Council into disrepute, other than those disclosed under the protection of the Confidential Reporting Code or statute, could be construed as a fundamental breach of confidence and trust, which may have implications for continued employment. This may include comments made by employees when participating in an outside group if such comments bring them into conflict with the Council.

13. Political Neutrality

- 13.1 Employees serve the authority as a whole. It follows they must serve all Councillors and not just those of the controlling group, and must ensure that the individual rights of all Councillors are respected.
- 13.2 Subject to the authority's conventions, employees may also be required to advise political groups. They must do so in ways, which do not compromise their political neutrality.
- 13.3 Employees, whether or not politically restricted (see Appendix 3), must follow every lawful expressed policy of the authority and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.
- 13.4 Political assistants appointed on fixed term contracts in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 are exempt from the standards set in paragraphs 13.1 to 13.3.
- 13.5 Whilst engaged in Council business employees must not wear or display on their person, vehicle or items such as tools and equipment, objects indicating affiliation with or opposition to any political party or related pressure group.

14. Relationships

14.1 Between Employees

14.1.1 All employees have a responsibility to treat their colleagues with dignity and respect.

14.1.2 The Council requires all its employees to act responsibly to ensure

their own and colleague's health and safety by: complying with safety clothing and equipment; contributing to the review and improvement of working methods; acting in accordance with their training and instructions and current best practice and taking necessary emergency action having regard to their own or others' safety. Any work situation considered by an employee to be a serious and immediate danger, or any matters considered to be a failure or inadequacy in the health and safety precautions relevant to their work, must be notified to their immediate line manager.

5.2 Councillors

Employees are responsible to the authority through its senior managers. For some, their role is to give advice to Councillors and senior managers and all are there to carry out the authority's work. Mutual respect between employees and Councillors is essential to good local government. Close personal familiarity between employees and individual Councillors can damage the relationship and prove embarrassing to other employees and Councillors. In certain circumstances they may blur accountability, endanger the democratic process and lead to ineffective and inefficient management. Over familiarity should therefore be avoided. Appendix 4 to this document is the Council's approved protocol in respect of relationships between Officers and Councillors.

5.3 The Local Community and Service Users

5.3.1 Employees, in providing services to the Community, are acting on behalf of the Council and should always act in a way that preserves public confidence in the Council.

5.3.2 Employees have a duty at all times, to uphold the law and relevant guidance bearing in mind the public's trust placed in Council employees.

5.3.3 Employees working with young people or vulnerable adults are in a particular position of great trust. Any breach of that trust, assault or sexual misconduct or breach of policies and procedures meant to safeguard vulnerable service users and other recipients of Council services will be regarded as potential gross misconduct. Employees must, in their own interests read their Department codes of practice and conduct in conjunction with this Corporate Code Of Conduct and must observe the Children's Act, the Rotherham Area Child Protection and Adult Abuse Protection Procedures.

5.4 Relationships with prospective or current Contractors

5.4.1 Employees involved in the tendering process and dealing with contractors should be clear on the distinction between client and contractor roles within the authority. Senior employees who have both a client and contractor responsibility must be aware of the need for

accountability and openness.

5.4.2 Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, should declare that relationship in writing to their Director.

5.4.3 Employees who are privy to confidential information on contracts out to tender, or costs for either internal or external contractors, must not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

5.4.4 Employees must ensure that no special favour is shown to current or former employees or their partners, close relatives or business associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them.

5.4.5 Employees contemplating a 'management buyout', must as soon as they have a definite intent inform the Chief Executive and the relevant Strategic Director and Director. They must withdraw from all aspects of preparation, tendering, evaluation and award processes.

5.4.6 Where the competitive tendering of Council Services is being carried out employees involved directly in the process must declare their membership of or affiliation to, any organisation which may have an interest in tendering for the service to their Director/Strategic Director.

6. Recruitment and other employment matters

6.1 In accordance with the Council's Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy, employees must take care that they are not open to any charge of discrimination in recruitment or employment practices, by fully adhering to the Council's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice.

6.2 To avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees must not be involved in selection and appointment processes where they are related to an applicant or have a personal or business relationship with them. They should declare an interest where there is a potential conflict of interest in such cases.

6.3 Similarly, employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a relative, partner, etc.

7. Information Technology and Data Security

7.1 Employees must ensure that they follow the Council's security procedures in relation to the use of computers and the proper management of computer-held information. Particular care must be taken to observe established procedures when using passwords and when logging on and off. Employees must never share passwords, which may lead to unauthorised access to

Council systems. Where this practice is found, employees should be aware it may lead to disciplinary action.

- 7.2 In respect of internet and intranet access, employees must comply with Council Policies such as the Codes of Practice on Information Security, Internet and e mail usage, the Use of Communications Policy and relevant legislation such as the Regulatory and Investigatory Powers Act, Data Protection Act, Obscene Publications Act, Computer Misuse Act and the Theft Act.

8. Use of Council Systems, Property and Facilities

- 8.1 The Council's property such as telephones, mobile phones, the internet, intranet, e-mail, stationery, photocopiers, word processors and other machines or tools, materials, offices, car parks and facilities, may only be used for Council business unless permission for private use is given under the terms of the Council's codes of practice or by management. This also applies to all automatic processing equipment such as laptops, PC's, software including computer games and data, none of which may be used for private purposes or removed from the premises without the express permission of the appropriate manager.
- 8.2 Employees will be required to pay for telephone calls using land lines or mobile phones, or the use of facsimile equipment, for private purposes, through the approved systems in place for the collection of such monies. Employees will be expected to keep calls to a minimum level and managers will have the discretion to determine what is, or is not excessive.
- 8.3 Telephone call and e-mail/internet logging systems are in operation in the Council and may be used to identify usage for private purposes. Any communications using Council systems can be monitored.
- 8.4 Employees must adhere to all of the Council's specific system security measures that are currently in place or introduced in the future.
- 8.5 Care in the use of language contained in e-mails is essential as misuse could leave employees and the Council liable to legal action. In the case of employees internal proceedings under bullying and harassment procedures or the disciplinary procedure may also result.

9. Dress and Personal Appearance

- 9.1 Council employees act as ambassadors for Departments. Consequently employees must maintain a standard of dress and appearance that is appropriate or required for the workplace and to the work being undertaken. Employees' appearance contributes to the quality of customer care provided. Employees must be clean and tidy and ensure good personal hygiene. Where particular clothing is provided for health, safety and hygiene and/or uniform purposes it must be worn. This includes name badges. In particular,

managers and employees on Council reception areas are expected to dress smartly and portray a business-like and professional image.

- 9.2 The Council seeks to promote diversity within its workforce and recognises the importance of cultural dress to its employees. Cultural dress is a visible sign of this commitment and employees will be supported in observing cultural dress codes within the general principles referred to at 9.1 above.

10. Criminal convictions

- 10.1 Where an employees job involves working with children or vulnerable adults the Council will require the employees to apply for disclosure of criminal convictions to the Criminal Records Bureau. Employees are required under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exemptions Amendment Order), to disclose all convictions (spent or unspent), cautions or bind overs, before commencement of employment. In the case of other jobs an employee must disclose any “unspent” criminal convictions before commencement of employment.
- 10.2 Employees whose work involves driving a Council vehicle must declare any motoring offences to their manager, including parking fines.
- 10.3 As a matter of fundamental confidence and trust employees must inform their manager of any pending criminal proceedings against them before or during their employment.
- 10.4 Any declaration made under 10.2 or 10.3 must be recorded in writing by Managers and placed on the employee’s personal file as a matter of record.
- 10.5 Failure to disclose convictions or to comply with any of the above constitutes possible gross misconduct and may result in disciplinary action, including the possibility of dismissal.

11. Drugs and Alcohol

- 11.1 Council employees act as ambassadors for the Council and must attend work in a fit condition to undertake their duties in a safe manner.
- 11.2 The Council believes that the consumption of alcohol impairs performance and may constitute a health and safety risk. It therefore discourages its employees from drinking before work or at lunch times. Employees should be aware of the impact consuming alcohol can have on their image and performance and the way that subsequent actions/behaviour may be perceived by the public and other employees. Drinking during working hours is a disciplinary offence and employees adjudged to be under the influence of alcohol while at work may be suspended from duty.
- 11.3 The use of illegal substances at work or which impact adversely on performance at work will not be tolerated and may result in the Council reporting the matter to the police and potential disciplinary action.

11.4 Employees are advised to acquaint themselves with the Council's substance misuse policy. Managers have responsibility to ensure staff who may experience such problems are provided with copies of the policy. Support and advice will be given to employees willing to accept help and follow a programme of rehabilitation. A failure to follow any such programme and continuing problems in the workplace will result in issues of conduct being dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedure.

12. Outside commitments

12.1 The Council's duty of care under the Working Time Regulations requires that reasonable steps are taken to ensure that workers do not exceed an average 48 hours per week. The Council prefers its full time employees not to have paid secondary employment of any kind. The Council recognises that many of its part time employees may have secondary employment. However, all employees are required to declare to their Director any secondary employment. It will be the responsibility of managers to confirm with the employee whether this conflicts with their Council employment.

12.2 All employees should be clear about their contractual obligations and should not take outside employment, which conflicts with the authority's interests. This will include any activities which might be approved, monitored or regulated as part of their Council employment.

12.3 An employee's declaration of secondary employment, does not remove the right of the Council to take disciplinary action against any employee whose secondary employment is deemed to be, or has been, detrimental to the interests or reputation of the Council.

12.4 Employee appointments as School Governors, Councillors to other Local Authorities, membership of the Territorial Army, appointment as a Justice of the Peace or as a Member of the Employment Tribunal do not constitute secondary employment as described in this Code. Nonetheless the principles of employees making line managers aware of these duties and seeking appropriate time off in a reasonable and timely manner apply.

12.5 Guidance on payment and receipt of fees for other work is shown in Appendix 2.

12.6 Employees of the Council will not be permitted to hold voting rights or trusteeships of external bodies who have contracts with or otherwise grant funded by, the Council, without the express consent of their Director. There is a potential conflict of interest between an employee's responsibilities to protect the interests of the Council and the legal duties of a Trustee or voting member of an independent organisation. It is also extremely doubtful whether employees will be covered by the Council's indemnity in such circumstances.

12.7 The copyright in all records and documents made by employees in the course of their employment shall belong to the Authority.

13. Personal interests

13.1 Employees must declare to their Director any non-financial interests that may bring about conflict with the authority's interests. All such declarations should be recorded in Service's registers of interests.

13.2 Employees must declare to an appropriate manager any financial interests, which could conflict with the authority's interests.

13.3 Employees should declare to an appropriate manager membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules or membership or conduct. A definition of what constitutes a secret society is shown at Appendix 1.

13.4 Any employee contemplating purchasing or leasing of Council owned land should raise the matter with their Director or Strategic Director to ensure that there is not or could not reasonably be seen to be any opportunity for influencing the disposal process or use or information not generally available to purchasers. Certain employees holding designated posts directly concerned with land disposal will be precluded from purchasing or leasing Council land.

14. Corruption

14.1 Council employees must not use their position to confer on or secure for himself/herself, or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage.

14.2 Employees must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence for them corruptly to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing or not doing anything or showing favour or disfavour to any person in their official capacity.

14.3 Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council acknowledges the responsibility it has for the administration of public funds, and emphasises to the public and its employees the importance it places on probity, financial control and honest administration. The Council is also committed to the fight against fraud, whether perpetrated by employees, contractors or the public.

14.4 To demonstrate this commitment and the Council's proactive approach to the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption and the action it will take, the Council has adopted a fraud and corruption policy.

14.5 Employees must use public funds responsibly and lawfully. They must work to ensure the Council uses its resources prudently and within the law and that the local community gets value for money. The Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations must be observed.

- 14.6 Defrauding and stealing (or attempting to do so) from the Council or any person or organisation in any way will not be tolerated. This includes falsification of claims, e.g. time sheets, mileage and travel/subsistence allowances with the intention of obtaining payment. Employees should be aware that the Council shares data with other Government agencies such as Department for Work and Pensions and the Inland Revenue.
- 14.7 Employees should not use Council procurement processes for personal purchases, unless authorised to do so.

15. Gifts and Payments

15.1 Gifts and payments to employees related to employment

- 15.1.1 Employees must be careful in the exercise of their duties not to show by their behaviour that they may be influenced by any gifts whilst acting in an official capacity.
- 15.1.2 The Prevention of Corruption Acts 1906 and 1916 make it a criminal offence for employees to demand or accept any gift or reward in return for allowing themselves to be influenced in their official capacity by any person seeking to obtain a contract from a local authority.
- 15.1.3 As a general rule, therefore, all gifts and other benefits must be refused. If gifts are delivered or sent by post to the place of work, they should be returned if the sender can be identified with an appropriately worded letter. Offers should be declined tactfully, with an explanation that this is Council policy. Where it is not possible to return a gift, or if it is considered that refusal would cause unnecessary offence, then the gift may be appropriated for the benefit of the Council and donated to the Mayor's Charity or other suitable similar purpose.
- 15.1.4 Employees must record any gift, received or offered, in a Gifts and Hospitality Book, to be held and monitored by each Director. The record should include the following information:
- 1) the date and time of offer/receipt;
 - 2) the person making the offer;
 - 3) persons present;
 - 4) the nature of the gift;
 - 4) the approximate value;
 - 5) whether accepted or declined;
 - 6) reasons for acceptance (if applicable).
- 15.1.5 The only gifts not required to be recorded in accordance with the above paragraph are those of a nominal value issued for publicity purposes such as pens, diaries and calendars.

15.2 Gifts and payments to employees unrelated to employment

15.2.1 Employees on occasion receive payment or gifts for personal care/work, which is unassociated with their employment with the Council. All employees who carry out such work for members of the public who are in receipt of services from the Authority and particularly Adult Social Services (e.g. meals-on-wheels, home care, warden service, social work support) must declare these arrangements to their Director in writing. Any such declaration must be acknowledged and the service user advised that next of kin should be made aware of the arrangement.

16. Hospitality

16.1 Employees should exercise discretion in offering and accepting hospitality. Acceptance of meals and refreshments for example may be a necessary part of Council business, i.e. provided to enable the parties to continue discussion. The meals or refreshments must be of a modest kind and if possible the employee should pay for their own meal and claim for reimbursement under the Conditions of Service.

16.2 In deciding whether to accept hospitality, regard should be given to the following: -

- (i) whether the person or firm offering the hospitality is likely to benefit from the hospitality;
- (ii) whether that person or firm is seeking a contract, or one has already been awarded;
- (iii) the timing of the hospitality in relation to decisions which the Council may take which will affect those offering it;
- (iv) whether it is preferable in the circumstances to entertain the person or persons concerned at the Council's premises or at the Council's expense;
- (v) the scale and location of the hospitality and whether it falls within working hours;
- (vi) whether a proposed visit is genuinely instructive or constitutes more of a social function;
- (vii) the frequency of the hospitality.

In all cases employees should be able to justify the arrangements they have made in the interests of the Council.

16.3 If an employee has any doubt about the acceptance of an invitation, this should be discussed with his/her Director. Employees must discuss any offers of hospitality over and above meals and refreshments with their Head of Service prior to accepting or declining them.

16.4 Acceptance by employees of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where it is clear the hospitality is

corporate rather than personal, where the Council gives consent in advance and where the Council is satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised. Where visits to inspect equipment, etc. are required, employees should ensure that the Council meets the cost of such visits to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions.

16.5 Employees must record any hospitality, received or offered, in the Gifts and Hospitality Book, to be held and monitored by each Director. The record should include the following information:

- 1) The date and time of offer/receipt;
- 2) the person making the offer;
- 3) persons present;
- 4) the type of hospitality;
- 5) the approximate value;
- 6) whether accepted or declined;
- 7) reasons for acceptance (if applicable).

16.6 The only hospitality not required to be recorded in accordance with the above paragraph, is hospitality of a modest kind received during normal working hours in the course of conducting the Council's business. This would include light refreshments such as tea, coffee, biscuits and sandwich lunch or similar.

17. Legacies

17.1 Occasions have arisen when employees who work, for example, in residential homes for the elderly, and Home Carers have been included in the Wills of people whom they have looked after. On the one hand this can reflect the genuine wish of a client to register their thanks to someone who has looked after them, perhaps over a number of years. On the other hand, such gestures could be open to misinterpretation, particularly if a large sum of money is involved. It is, therefore, a rule that an employee must notify their Director if they are left a legacy, which is connected with their employment or if the person in question was in receipt of a personal Council service. Failure to disclose receipt of a legacy may result in disciplinary action. Director must report the circumstances of all cases to the appropriate Cabinet Member.

18. Sponsorship – Giving and Receiving

18.1 Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a local government activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.

18.2 Where the Council wishes to sponsor an event or service neither an employee nor any partner, spouse or relative must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way without there being full disclosure to the employee's Director of any such interest. Similarly, where the Council through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, employees should

ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

19. Investigations and Monitoring

- 19.1 Each Director and Strategic Director is responsible for the monitoring of his/her employee's activities in accordance with the provisions/declarations of this Code of Conduct and related Codes of Practice. Any such monitoring will comply with relevant legislation such as the Regulatory and Investigatory Powers Act, the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act.
- 19.2 Where the Monitoring Officer is undertaking an investigation in accordance with regulations under section 66(2) of the Local Government Act 2000 employees of the Council must comply with any requirement made by the Monitoring Officer in connection within such an investigation.

20. Summary

- 20.1 Employees requiring further information or requiring advice concerning the appropriate course of action to adopt in any situation, should contact their Line Manager, Director, the Director of Human Resources, the Internal Audit Manager or the Monitoring Officer.
- 20.2 This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with its appendices and with any other Council codes of practice or policies that relate to employee conduct and/or workplace or system security policies and procedures.

21. Date of implementation

- 21.1 This Corporate Code of Conduct applies to all employees of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council with effect from December 2003.

The Corporate Code of Conduct will be kept under review in the light of recommendations and guidance issued nationally in relation to standards of conduct in public life and revised as necessary.

APPENDIX 1

DEFINITION OF WHAT CONSTITUTES A MEMBERSHIP OF SECRET SOCIETY

The following is the Council's definition of what constitutes a society with secret rules (secret society).

'Any lodge, chapter, society, trust or regular gathering or meeting, which:

- a) is not open to members of the public who are not members of that lodge, chapter, society or trust; and
- b) includes in the grant of membership an obligation on the part of the member a requirement to make a commitment (whether by oath or otherwise) of allegiance to the lodge, chapter, society, gathering or meeting; and
- c) includes, whether initially or subsequently, a commitment (whether by oath or otherwise) of secrecy about the rules, membership or conduct of the lodge, chapter, society, trust, gathering or meeting.

A lodge, chapter, society, trust, gathering or meeting as defined above should not be regarded as a secret society if it forms part of the activity of a generally recognised religion.

OTHER EMPLOYMENT RELATED ACTIVITIES – FEES

Employees may be asked on occasions to give lectures or undertake work using their professional skills and expertise. If the work forms part of the duties of a post and the employee is carrying out an official duty, he/she must forward all fees to their employing Department. Any expenses incurred will be reimbursed through the normal procedures.

Employees in receipt of 'fees' in respect of undertaking work and/or lecturing to an outside organisation/persons) may retain the 'fees' providing:

- a) preparation and delivery of the work is undertaken outside working hours (unless covered below);
- b) equipment and/or materials are not being provided by the Council;
- c) the employee is not acting as a representative of the Council.

Where the work or lecture is undertaken during working hours the equivalent working hours must be re-arranged, in agreement with the line manager to accommodate the employee's request or annual leave, flexi leave or time off in lieu must be used. The employee concerned may also be granted unpaid leave, subject to the agreement of the line manager in consultation with their Human Resources Manager.

POLITICALLY RESTRICTED POSTS

In order to uphold the principle of political neutrality of local government employees, under the Local Government and Housing Act, 1989, some Council posts are designated as 'politically restricted'.

Political Restriction applies to:

- Chief and deputy chief officers
- Employees who give advice on a regular basis to the Council or speak on a regular basis to journalists or broadcasters on the Council's behalf.
- Employees who work in politically sensitive areas, i.e. Elections staff

The following restrictions apply to any employee who is appointed to a politically restricted post:

- The post holder must not announce an intention to be a candidate for election to the House of Commons, the European Parliament or a local authority.
- Where an officer announces that he/she wishes to resign his/her post because he/she intends to be a candidate for election to the House of Commons, his/her appointment shall terminate.
- The post holder must not act as an election agent or sub-agent.
- The post holder shall not be an officer of a political party or branch, or a committee or sub-committee member of a party, if this involves him/her in general management of or acting on behalf of the party or branch. This does not prevent membership of a political party or, for example, social activity unrelated to the general management of the party or branch.
- The post holder shall not canvass on behalf of a political party or on behalf of a candidate for election.

Post holders other than political assistants are also prevented from:-

- Speaking to the public with the apparent intention of affecting support for a political party.
- Publishing or causing to be published written or artistic work if intended to affect public support for a political party. This would not, however, apply to for example displaying a poster on private property.

There is an Independent Adjudicator whose role is to consider applications from local government employees for exemption from political restriction in respect of their posts. In making an application to the Independent Adjudicator, an employee is required to provide a certified job description together with a certificate of opinion to state whether or not in the opinion of the Council, the duties of the post include advising the Council on a regular basis or speaking on a regular basis to journalists or broadcasters. In other words, exemptions can only be granted to those whose posts are politically restricted because of salary alone but whose duties do not include those just mentioned.

MEMBER / OFFICER RELATIONS PROTOCOL

Introduction

- A With the adoption of the Code of Conduct for Members, which came into effect on 24 April 2002, the opportunity has been taken to produce a Protocol with regard to member/officer relations. It seeks to set out guidance and promote greater clarity and certainty and the setting of good standards in accordance with the Nolan Report and subsequent Government guidance. This also includes some general guidance on Access to Information.
- B Given the variety and complexity of member and officer relations, this protocol does not seek to cover everything or be prescriptive in its application. General guidance is offered on some of the issues that most commonly arise or cause concern. It is hoped, therefore, that the approach which this protocol adopts will serve as a guide to dealing with other issues that may arise from time to time.
- C This protocol seeks to encourage best practice and to promote greater clarity and certainty between the various relationships. If any member is unsure about any matter, he or she should contact the Monitoring Officer (Assistant Director of Legal Services) for appropriate advice and assistance. If any officer is unsure about any matter, he or she should contact the relevant Chief Officer and/or the Assistant Director of Legal Services.
- D The Standards and Ethics Committee may issue further general guidance on Rotherham's Code of Conduct for Members. In addition, a specific code is being considered for planning matters.

1. Underlying Principles

- 1.1 Members and officers are bound by their respective Codes of Conduct which seek to promote the highest ethical standards. This protocol supports those codes and is intended to promote mutual respect between members and officers with regard to their respective roles as set out below and in the Council's Constitution.
- 1.2 In order to ensure the business of the Council is transacted in an effective and efficient manner and with a view to ensuring that the Council is not brought into disrepute, the key guiding principles for members and officers have to be openness, honesty, fairness, transparency and treating everyone with respect.

2. The Role of Members

- 2.1 To promote the social, economic and environmental well being of the community.

- 2.2 Collectively be the ultimate policy makers and decision-makers and carry out a number of strategic and corporate functions.
- 2.3 Represent their communities and bring their views into the Council's decision-making process, i.e. become the advocate of and for their communities.
- 2.4 Deal with individual casework and act as an advocate for constituents in resolving particular concerns or grievances.
- 2.5 Balance different interests identified within the ward and represent the ward as a whole.
- 2.6 Be involved in decision making.
- 2.7 Be available to represent the Council on other bodies.
- 2.8 To promote the highest standards of conduct and ethics.
- 2.9 To act collectively as the employer of the staff.
- 2.10 To act in a specific capacity listed below where appointed so to do by the Council in accordance with the Constitution:
 - Chairman of the Council
 - Leader of the Cabinet
 - Member of the Cabinet
 - Portfolio holder (with or without delegated authority)
 - Chairman of a Scrutiny Committee
 - Member of a Scrutiny Committee
 - Chairman of a committee other than Scrutiny
 - Member of a committee other than Scrutiny
 - Representing the Council on outside bodies
- 2.11 Political Group meetings, whilst they form part of the preliminaries to Council decision-making, are not formal decision-making bodies of the Council and, as such, are not empowered, even under the new constitutional arrangements, to make decisions on behalf of the Council. Conclusions reached at such meetings do not, therefore, rank as Council decisions and it is essential that members and officers understand and interpret them accordingly;

3. The Role of Officers

- 3.1 To initiate and to implement the policies set and the decisions made by members.
- 3.2 To provide impartial professional and technical advice to members.
- 3.3 To carry out those functions delegated to officers.

- 3.4 To provide reasonable help, support and advice to all members.
- 3.5 To represent the Council on outside bodies.
- 3.6 To act in a specific capacity listed below where appointed so to do by the Council:

- **The Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service** (as defined by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 section 4) has the following functions and duties:

to prepare proposals for the consideration of the Council as to the co-ordination of the discharge of the Council's functions; the number and grades of staff that are required to discharge those functions; the organisation of the Council's staff; and the appointment and proper management of the Council's staff.

- **The Assistant Director of Legal Services as Monitoring Officer** (as defined by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 section 5) has the following functions and duties:

to prepare reports for the consideration of the Council where it appears that any proposal, decision or omission by the Council, a committee, sub-committee, or officer has given rise or is likely to give rise to a contravention of any statute or maladministration or injustice as mentioned in part III of the Local Government Act 1974.

- **The Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services as Chief Finance Officer** (as defined by the Local Government Act 1972 section 151) has the following functions and duties:

to prepare reports for the consideration of the Council where it appears that any committee, sub-committee, or officer has or is about to make a decision which involves or would involve the Council incurring expenditure which is unlawful; or has taken or is about to take a course of action which, if pursued to its conclusion, would be unlawful and is likely to cause a loss or deficiency to the Council; or is about to enter an item of account, the entry of which would be unlawful.

4. The Relationship Between Officers and Members

- 4.1 The relationship between officers and members should be characterised by mutual respect which is essential to good local government.
- 4.2 A distinction must be drawn between good working relationships and close personal familiarity between individual members and officers which can damage professional relationships and prove embarrassing to other members and officers. Situations should be avoided that could give rise to suspicion and any appearance of improper conduct. This includes excessive socialising between members and officers.

- 4.3 Whilst it is recognised that in some circumstances a close personal relationship will develop between Council members and staff, both the member and the member of staff must disclose that relationship to the Chief Executive. The member must also disclose that relationship to his or her group leader.
- 4.4 At all times the member and member of staff will ensure, as far as possible, there is no conflict of interest between them.
- 4.5 Any dealing between members and officers should be conducted with courtesy and respect and neither party should seek to take unfair advantage of their position. In particular, members should recognise and pay due regard to their role as an employer in their dealings with officers. Equally officers should understand that decisions of the Council are made by the Council as a whole and should not be attributed to individual members unless specific delegated powers exist.
- 4.6 The Council has statutory duties with regard to equalities issues to positively promote equality. Members and officers shall not by their behaviour or speech be discriminatory with regard to a person's gender, marital status, age, race, disability, religion or sexual orientation. Such principles shall apply to the implementation of all personnel policies, recruitment and promotion as they apply to day to day operations.
- 4.7 Members should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of a Council employee or of the employees collectively at meetings held in public or in the Press. Employees have no means of responding to criticism like this in public. (If members feel they have not been treated with proper respect, courtesy or have any concern about the conduct or capability of a Council employee they should raise the matter with the Director concerned if they fail to resolve it through direct discussion with the employee.)
- 4.8 Members should not require any officers to change their professional advice nor take any action which the officer considers unlawful or illegal or which would amount to maladministration or breach of a statutory code of conduct.
- 4.9 Members should consult with the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer about legality, maladministration, financial impropriety and probity or where they have any doubt as to whether the particular decisions were or are likely to be contrary to the policy framework or budget.
- 4.10 In seeking advice and support members should have due regard to the seniority of the officer with whom they are dealing and the fact that, while those officers owe duties to the Council as their employer such duties are first expressed to their respective manager and the Chief Executive and not to any individual member. For this reason members should not give direct instructions to staff unless authorised so to do by the Constitution. If so authorised, instructions shall be given to the relevant chief officer rather than a more junior member of staff.

- 4.11 Members of the Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and Regulatory Committees shall, at all times, respect the political impartiality of officers and must not expect or encourage officers (save for any political assistants to the political groups) to give a political view on any matter.
5. The Relationship Between the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Officers (when Executive decisions are being scrutinised).
- 5.1 The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees shall seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer where they consider there is doubt about the legality of Executive decisions or the Monitoring Officer and other appropriate officers where they consider a decision of the Executive might be contrary to the policy framework.
- 5.2 When considering calling officers to give evidence the Committee shall not normally, without the consent of the relevant Chief Officer, request the attendance of a junior officer to ensure that more junior officers are not put under undue pressure.
- 5.3 When asking officers to give evidence before the Committee questions should be confined, so far as possible, to questions of fact and explanation and professional opinion relating to policies and decisions.
- 5.4 Where they consider it appropriate the Committee may ask officers to explain advice given to members (of the Executive) prior to decisions being taken and explain decisions they themselves have taken under the Scheme of Delegation.
- 5.5 The Committee shall not question officers in such a manner whereby the nature and frequency of the questions or tone or language used could be considered by a reasonable person to be harassment, discriminatory or otherwise unacceptable, nor deal with matters which are of a possible disciplinary/capability nature.
- 5.6 The Committee shall at all times respect the political impartiality of the officers and must not expect officers to give a political view.
6. Officer Relationships with Party Groups
- 6.1 It must be recognised by all officers and members that in discharging their duties officers serve the Council as a whole and not exclusively any political group, combination of groups, or any individual members.
- 6.2 Officers may properly be called upon to support and contribute to the deliberations of political groups but must at all times maintain political neutrality. All officers must, in their dealings with political groups and individual members, treat them in a fair and even handed manner.

- 6.3 The support provided by officers can take many forms, ranging from a briefing with the Leader of the Executive, the leaders of other political groups, or chairs of committees, to a presentation to a full party group meeting.
- 6.4 When attendance is requested for political group meetings:
- 6.4.1 the request to attend a group meeting must be made through the Chief Executive;
 - 6.4.2. unless otherwise agreed by the Chief Executive, officers will not attend party group meetings which include persons who are not members of the Council or be present at purely party political discussions;
 - 6.4.3 such a request can only be made in relation to Council business;
 - 6.4.4 officers must respect the confidentiality of any party group discussions at which they are present.

7. Members in their Ward Role

- 7.1 When acting in their ward role members need to be mindful of their competing roles, i.e. acting for the Council and acting for constituents, and the possible conflicts of interest that can arise and the pressure this can bring on officer time.
- 7.2 Whenever a public meeting is organised by the Council to consider a local issue all the Members representing the ward or wards affected should be invited to attend the meeting.
- 7.3 Members may request officers to attend meetings or site visits or provide other assistance in their ward role. Such requests should be made to the relevant Strategic Director and not to individual officers.

8 Member Access to Documents and Information

- 8.1 Save as provided below every member of the Cabinet or of a committee, sub-committee of the Council has a right to inspect documents about the business of the Cabinet, that committee, or sub-committee.
- 8.2 A member who is not a member of a specific committee, sub-committee (or the Cabinet) may have access to any documents of that part of the Council if they satisfy the Council's Monitoring Officer that they reasonably need to see the documents to perform their duties (commonly known as the "need to know" principle).
- 8.3 A member is not entitled to inspect any document or have access to any information about a matter in which they have a prejudicial interest or where to do so would be in breach of any statutory provision.
- 8.4 The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (Section 100F of the

Local Government Act 1972 was introduced by that Act), gives further rights to elected members in addition to those at common law above. Section 100F makes it clear that any document which is in the possession or under the control of the Council and contains material relating to any business to be transacted at a meeting of the Council, or a committee or a sub-committee of the Council, will be open to inspection by any member of the Council unless it contains confidential or certain classes of exempt information.

9. Press Releases and Correspondence (including e-mails)

9.1 Press releases must operate within the limits of the Local Government Act 1986 which prohibits the Council from publishing material which appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. During the election period special rules apply with regard to Local Authority publicity.

9.2 Council press releases are produced and distributed by the communications team, from information supplied by officers. Press releases will usually quote the Leader, or the Member with responsibility for the area covered by the press release. On occasions, officers are also quoted. Contact with the media should be channelled through the communications team.

9.3 All correspondence written on behalf of the Council must be written on the relevant headed paper.

9.4 When members are writing they must make it clear whether they are writing on behalf of the Council or as the ward member.

10. Sanctions for Breach

10.1 Complaints regarding any breach of this Protocol by a member should be made in the first instance to the Chief Executive or to the Monitoring Officer. If the complaint cannot be resolved it may be referred to the Council's Standards and Ethics Committee.

10.2 Complaints regarding any breach of this Protocol by an officer may be referred to the relevant Strategic Director or Director, the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer, and may lead to disciplinary action. Complaints should be made in the first instance to the officer's Director.

Code of Official Conduct
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