

Officer Code of Conduct

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1. Policy Statement

The purpose of this Code is to support the Council's aim to provide high quality services fairly and efficiently in line with its values.

2. Policy Scope

The Officer Code of Conduct applies to all employees and workers of the Council, including school-based employees, agency workers, contractors and their staff whilst working for, or on behalf of, the Council. In this document the term "officer" covers all these groups

There is a Code of Conduct for members and a protocol outlining how members and officers work together. All these documents are part of the Council's Constitution and are published on the Council's website to maintain transparency and accessibility.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- Line managers are responsible for ensuring their staff read and understand the Code
- All officers are required to undertake the Code of Conduct training as part of the mandatory training upon joining the Council and required to annually refresh their knowledge by reviewing the code and confirming their understanding through the training module.
- All officers will be responsible for engaging with and adhering to the Code and related guidance and procedures
- Trade Unions will be consulted regarding the content of the Code
- The People and Change service will be responsible for the Code and providing guidance and direction
- The People, Performance and Development Committee is required to endorse the Code recommend its approval to Full Council for inclusion in the Council's Constitution

The Code refers to a number of supporting policies which are published on Our Surrey. Those which are statutory policies will also be published on the Surrey Education Services Hub. School staff can access documents by request to their School Business Manager

4. Introduction

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all Council officers. As representatives of the Council, officers are expected to uphold the highest standards of professional competence, knowledge, integrity, confidentiality, financial propriety and personal conduct. **This commitment to excellence ensures that all members of the community are treated with fairness and respect.**

Officers are expected to apply the Code of Conduct and other Council policies in their duties. The Code sits alongside all other Council policies and outlines standards for officers to follow in their day-to-day work. **This comprehensive approach ensures that all actions are inclusive and considerate of diverse perspectives.**

Where officers identify themselves or can be identified as a Surrey County Council officer, the same rules that apply to general actions also apply to conduct online, including on work related, and personal social media sites. **This consistency helps maintain a respectful and inclusive online presence.**

Officers must be aware of the standards of behaviour outlined in the Code of Conduct regarding their conduct outside of work. Any conduct by officers in breach of the Code of Conduct and/or that may affect the Council's reputation or position may be considered a disciplinary matter, potentially involving formal action, for example: officers are required to inform their manager of any cautions, arrests or convictions in respect of any criminal offence as soon as possible. This includes offences under the Road Traffic Act and sanctions from professional bodies for misconduct such as those affecting social workers, teachers, accountants and lawyers.

Adherence to the code may also be taken into account in performance management.

Throughout this policy there are references to various Council employment policies. All of these can be found on SharePoint or Our Surrey or Surrey Education Services hub for schools under HR Resources For further assistance or clarification, please contact [Myhelpdesk@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:Myhelpdesk@ Surreycc.gov.uk) or 020 8541 9000.

5. Organisational Ethics and Personal Conduct

The Council is committed to ensuring its decisions and operations are open, accountable, and aligned with recognised ethical standards. Officers of the Council are therefore required to act in accordance with the Seven Principles of Public Life, which express the high standards with which we expect our employees to align

The Seven Principles of Public Life are:

Selflessness – Officers are expected to act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity – Officers are expected to avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work.

Objectivity – Officers are expected to act and make decisions impartially, fairly and on merit using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability – Officers are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and are required to submit themselves to appropriate scrutiny.

Openness – Officers are expected to act and make decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should only be withheld from the public if there are clear and lawful reasons to do so.

Honesty – Officers are expected to be truthful. This includes declaring any conflicts of interests and taking steps to resolve such conflicts; and

Leadership – Officers are expected to actively promote and support these principles by applying them to their own behaviour and challenging poor behaviour.

This Code is based on and builds upon these seven principles published by [the Committee on Standards in Public Life](#).

The Council expects all officers to behave ethically and maintain high standards of personal conduct to sustain the good reputation of the Council and its services. In doing so officers are expected to be aware of and act in accordance with the culture and behaviours set out in The Surrey Way.

What culture and behaviours do we expect?

- **Inclusive and Compassionate:** An inclusive and compassionate place where we value diversity and can be ourselves at work
- **Collaborative and Trusting:** Enabling a collaborative and inviting place where we're empowered to be open, trust each other, and work as one

- **Ambitious and Outcomes-focused:** An ambitious and outcomes-focused place where we are passionate about our purpose and take accountability for delivering great results
- **Inventive and Dynamic:** An inventive and dynamic place where we promote a learning mindset and adapt to new insights and opportunities

6. Compliance with Instructions

The Council expects all officers to comply with lawful written and oral instructions received during their role.

This ensures a consistent approach across the Council in how we procure services and goods, manage people, and handle financial matters. Relevant procedures and instructions are published on Our Surrey. Schools are expected to adhere to locally adopted policies and procedures.

7. Health, Safety and Wellbeing

All officers must take reasonable steps to protect their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their work. Some officers, particularly managers, have specific responsibilities detailed in the Council's safety policies and procedures. The Council's [Health, Safety and Welfare Policy](#) and [Manual](#) is available on Our Surrey. School staff can access documents by request to their School Business Manager

Officers are expected to report for work in a fit and safe state to carry out their duties. Consuming alcohol or using illegal drugs during work hours, including rest or meal breaks, whether on or off Council premises, is prohibited. Incidents involving intoxicating substances outside working hours may be considered a disciplinary offence if they breach the Code of Conduct.

Exceptions are made for prescribed and over-the-counter medications, provided they do not compromise safety. Employees must inform their manager if such medications may affect their duties. Additionally, employees must not consume intoxicating substances before duty or when they might need to work at short notice, ensuring they arrive at work free from any effects of these substances.

For further detail about the Council's expectations regarding drugs and alcohol officers should refer to the [Drug and Alcohol policy](#) on Our Surrey or Surrey Education Services hub for schools under HR Resources.

The Council is committed to providing a smoke free environment for staff. Officers are expected to comply with the Council's [Smokefree workplace policy](#) on Our Surrey or Surrey Education Services hub for schools under HR Resources.

7.1 The Duty of Candour

The Duty of Candour is set out in regulation 20 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014. The duty has been in place for NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts since 2014 and for all other providers regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) since 2015.

The Duty of Candour applies to every health and social care provider that CQC regulates. The duty requires registered providers and registered managers (known as 'registered persons') to act in an open and transparent way with people receiving care or treatment from them. The

regulation also defines 'notifiable safety incidents' and specifies how registered persons must apply the duty if these incidents occur.

The Duty of Candour [regulations](#) apply as soon as reasonably practicable after a screening service, used by a provider, has become aware that a notifiable safety incident has occurred. The regulations refer to the principals of openness and transparency when disclosing information to a service user or patient, following screening.

The Council would expect its service providers to abide by the Duty of Candour in any incidents laid out in the regulations on the gov.uk website [The Duty Of Candour](#)

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8. Governance

8.1 Handling and treatment of information relating to the County Council

All officers should be aware of what information should be made available to Members, government departments, service users and the public; and which information should remain confidential. Any information made available should be provided in a clear and concise way. Officers should not use any information gained during their employment for personal gain or pass it on to others who might use it in such a way. Information concerning a service user, resident, officer or Member's personal affairs should not be divulged without prior approval, except where that disclosure is required or sanctioned by law. It is important that officers take all relevant steps to comply with data protection requirements and ensure that confidential information is kept secure.

While the organisation aims to use evidence-based data to guide our strategies, some data may not be available to share if this would mean that individuals and their characteristics, or personal data could be identified. This would contravene UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). For further information you should read the Information Governance guidance, available on Our Surrey: [Managing Information - your responsibilities](#)

Schools staff can access documents by request to their school business manager.

8.2 Declaring personal interests and outside commitments

The Council expects that officers will ensure:

- their private interests or beliefs do not conflict with their professional duties
- their position within the Council is not used to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person
- they are not involved in, nor influence, any decision or allocation of Council services or resources from which they, their family or friends might benefit.

Officers must declare personal interests where there is, or could be perceived to be, a conflict of interest between their duties as an officer and their membership of any organisation.

Officers should declare their conflict of interest on My Surrey, which ensures the line manager is aware and has to approve the conflict (or agree mitigations if it cannot be agreed) and reassess the situation every 12 months.

School staff can declare personal interests to their School Business Manager.

Actual or potential conflicts of interest are recorded and reviewed annually.

All officers must declare:

- i. Any financial or non-financial interest which could be considered in any way to bring about a conflict with the Council's interests. This includes discussions or correspondence over any private interest with organisations that may have a business connection with the Council.
- ii. Membership of any organisation that is not open to the public; requires commitment of allegiance to the organisation to be a member; and which has secrecy about its rules, membership, or conduct.
- iii. Membership of any groups, clubs and societies, (including online groups – please see Section 11 regarding social media), that an officer believes could be relevant to declare in particular circumstances, especially where a conflict of interest may occur.
- iv. If a relative, partner or close personal friend holds a senior managerial position in an organisation with which the Council does, or seeks to do, business.

If officers have any doubt about whether they need to declare a personal interest or outside commitment, they must discuss the situation with their manager. The manager will decide what controls should be put in place to mitigate any associated risks and confirm these in writing.

Officers are required to seek written permission from their Assistant Director/Headteacher before engaging in any other work or business which might relate to or impact their duties for the Council. This includes paid or unpaid work. It is important not to take paid or unpaid work which conflicts with the Council's interests. In addition, some officers have contractual restrictions on taking outside employment.

Agency workers who wish to work for other organisations while also working for the Council should ensure this is checked by their agency. They must not exceed the Working Time Directive limits and should take regular breaks to ensure they are fit and well to work. Part-time employees with secondary employment must ensure these checks are adhered to.

For further guidance see the [Working Time Regulations policy](#) and [Conflict of Interest](#) guidance on Our Surrey.

8.3 Declaring related party transactions

The Council is required to disclose material transactions with related parties. The requirement aims to provide assurance to readers of financial statements that any significant transactions entered into between the organisation and those in a position of power to influence its decisions are disclosed and transparent.

Example; A contract is awarded to a company owned by a Council officer to provide maintenance services for public facilities

Officers must declare annually:

- i. Positions of influence they hold within partnerships, companies, trusts, or any entities providing services to the Council/School
- ii. Positions of influence they hold (in a personal capacity) within organisations receiving grant funding from the Council/School

Senior Officers of the Council are required to provide an annual zero return to the Audit and Governance Committee.

Declarations also extend to a relative or partner of the officer if they have an interest in any such organisation.

8.4 Declaring bankruptcy

Bankruptcy may impact the duties of officers who have financial responsibilities. Such officers must inform the relevant Assistant Director/Headteacher if they are declared bankrupt or are involved as a director of a company that is wound up or put into voluntary liquidation, if it may potentially impact their role and duties. The purpose of the declaration is to ensure that a proper framework of support for the officer is in place.

8.5 Whistleblowing

The Council is committed to the highest possible standards of honesty, openness, integrity and accountability. We seek to conduct our affairs responsibly, ensure that our activities are openly and effectively managed, and maintain our principles of public interest disclosure. In line with this commitment, if you become aware of activities that you believe to be illegal, improper, unethical, or otherwise inconsistent with this code you are encouraged to report the matter in accordance with the Council's confidential reporting procedure – see the [Whistleblowing policy](#) on Our Surrey or Surrey Education Services hub via School Business Manager.

Officers who raise matters of concern in this way have specific protections under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

8.6 Fraud and corruption

Officers play a crucial role in the Council's strategy against fraud and corruption. All officers need to understand their responsibilities and duties regarding the prevention and reporting of suspected fraud and corruption as outlined in the [Council's Strategy Against Fraud and Corruption](#), which is published on the Council's website

9. Working Relationships

Relationships with colleagues, service users and contractors should be conducted in a professional, courteous and respectful manner. Officers are expected to treat others with fairness and dignity at all times and to work to resolve differences where these exist. The Council will not tolerate any form of harassment, bullying, victimisation or discrimination against service users, residents, colleagues, other officers or job applicants. See the [Ending Bullying and Harassment policy](#) published on Our Surrey or Surrey Education Services

9.1 Working with Members

Mutual respect between officers and Members is essential to good local government. Close personal familiarity between officers and individual members can damage the relationship and must therefore be avoided.

For further information about working relationships between officers and members please see the Members/Officers protocol published on the Council's website.

9.2 Working with colleagues

Officers are expected to treat colleagues and those with whom they come into contact in the course of their work with fairness and respect.

[The Ending Bullying and Harassment policy](#) which defines bullying and harassment is published on Our Surrey or Surrey Education Services hub.

To prevent any accusation of bias, or discrimination, officers should refrain from participating in an appointment or any management decisions relating to, but not limited to, discipline,

promotion or any pay adjustments or conditions of another officer, or prospective officer to whom they are related or with whom they have a close personal relationship.

9.3 Sexual Harassment at work related events

Surrey County Council is committed to ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for all employees, both in the workplace and at work-related events, including work related social events. This includes a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in all contexts.

When planning work-related events, it is essential to consider the risks of harassment and take reasonable steps to mitigate these risks. This duty extends to preventing sexual harassment by visitors, customers, clients, or other third parties that employees may interact with during work or at social events.

Sexual harassment is strictly prohibited, unlawful, and will not be tolerated. Any incidents of sexual harassment may result in disciplinary action.

Information on reporting procedures and examples of behaviours that constitute sexual harassment can be found in section 7.1 of the full policy document, [Ending Bullying and Harassment policy](#).

9.4 Working with the local community and service users

Officers should ensure professional, courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all. Officers should be especially sensitive when dealing with vulnerable children and adults.

9.5 Positions of trust

Officers should ensure they maintain professional standards and do not abuse, or appear to abuse, their position of trust in the way they conduct their relationships with service users/pupils/contractors, their families or carers. Specific examples of conduct which should be avoided include, but are not limited to:

- social meetings with pupils or service users (including their carers or families) which could be perceived as inappropriate; and/or
- exchanging personal contact details or connecting using social media; or
- engaging in activity or associating with people outside work whose current or past conduct could raise doubts or concerns about your integrity or ability to be in a 'position of trust' with regard to children or vulnerable adults.

This applies to all roles, but in particular where specific professional standards are a statutory requirement of the role

9.6 The Press and Media

Officers must not deal directly with the press or the media in relation to anything related to Council business unless it is part of their role, or they have been expressly authorised by their Assistant Director/ Headteacher. If an officer speaks as a private individual directly to the press or at a public meeting or other situation where their remarks may be reported to the press, they must take reasonable steps to ensure nothing said might lead the public to think they are acting in their capacity as a Council officer. An officer should not make an endorsement in their work capacity, through press channels, or on social media, regarding an external organisation which might infer a corporate endorsement on behalf of Surrey County Council.

Trade Unions and their elected and accredited representatives may be approached by the media for comments or interviews on a particular issue. In such cases the representative must

make it clear that they are doing so in their capacity as a representative of that union and not as a Surrey County Council officer and that their comments may not represent the views or policy of the Council.

9.7 Political neutrality

- ii. Members are elected to direct the policies and activities of Surrey County Council. Officers should ensure they serve all Members, not just those of the controlling group, and respect their individual rights.
- iii. Officers should ensure that their own personal or political opinions do not interfere with any policy of the authority. Where officers advise political groups, they are expected to be politically neutral.
- iv. Officers may not, by law, be an elected member of the authority in which they are employed.

(Political assistants appointed on fixed term contracts in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 are exempt from political neutrality).

Certain posts are designated as politically restricted by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. An officer's contract of employment will indicate whether they hold one of these posts and, if they do, they will be required by law to observe certain restrictions regarding their out-of-work activities.

The political activities which are restricted for these posts include:

- standing as a Member of Parliament, Member of the European Parliament or a Councillor in any local authority (other than a Parish Council)
- holding office in a political party at any level, (except in limited roles concerned only with the internal membership of the party)
- canvassing at elections
- speaking in public or publishing any written or artistic work intended to influence public support for a political party.

Officers need to be aware of their position in terms of political activity. If they are unsure whether an activity is subject to 'political activity restrictions', they should seek advice from their line manager, who will consult the relevant Executive Director or Monitoring Officer if necessary.

Violation of the statutory rules is a breach of contract and will render them liable for investigation and possible disciplinary action under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

For further information see [politically restricted positions](#) on Our Surrey.

9.7 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Council is committed to creating a workplace that is inclusive and compassionate, where we value diversity and can be ourselves at work.

The Council is committed to the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and all staff are expected to demonstrate commitment to these principles in carrying out their work.

[Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion - Surrey County Council](#)

The Council is bound by the Equality Act 2010 which protects any person from being discriminated against or harassed on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage of civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race or ethnicity, religion or belief,

sex, or sexual orientation. All staff are responsible for helping Surrey County Council meet its obligations under the Equality Act which include:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations between groups of people with different protected characteristics

[Equality, diversity and inclusion - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](http://surreycc.gov.uk)

10. Contractors and Competitive Tendering

Contractors may include individuals who are temporarily working alongside Council officers, or officers of an external firm that has been awarded a contract to provide services on behalf of the Council. All contractors should be treated with courtesy and respect.

10.1 Contractors

Orders and contracts must be awarded through fair and open competition among all tenders. No special favour should be shown to any businesses.

Officers should declare any relationship with a particular contractor, or any potential contractors, to their Assistant Director /Headteacher and should not participate in any procurement activity where these Conflicts of Interest could arise. For further information see the [Procurement and Contract Standing Orders](#).

If officers wish to tender for a contract from the Council, they must declare such an intention to the appropriate Assistant Director / Headteacher, at the earliest possible opportunity.

10.2 Separation of roles during competitive tendering

Officers should be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles. Senior officers who have both a client and contractor responsibilities must be aware of the need for accountability and openness.

Officers' privy to confidential information on tenders or costs relating to contractors should not disclose this information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

Officers should ensure no special favour is shown to current or recent former officers, or associates, in awarding contracts.

11. Gifts and Hospitality

It is essential that the public can be confident that decisions are made for proper reasons and are not influenced by the interests of individual officers, their relatives or friends.

The Council expects officers, including those seconded to other organisations, to refuse offers of gifts and hospitality. Such offers should only be accepted in exceptional circumstances, where there is a clear justification for doing so and where this has been formally approved in advance.

For reasons of integrity and transparency, the gifts and hospitality requirements extend to the spouse, partner and immediate family of officers, where the provider is a business partner or associate of the Council.

Gifts and hospitality that have been offered, whether accepted, declined or accepted and passed on to charity, must be registered on My Surrey or the school's local register.

For further detail and information about what needs to be recorded see the [Gifts and Hospitality policy](#) on Our Surrey or Surrey Education Service hub under HR Resources.

12. Use of the Council's Materials or Resources

Officers are expected to use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible manner and should not make personal use of any Council resources unless authorised to do so.

12.1 Property and resources

Council property, materials and resources should be used solely for Council work. No improper use should be made of any facility such as vehicles, equipment, stationery or other services provided by the Council for its business.

The Council recognises that there are times when calls must be made during working hours. Reasonable use of the telephone in these cases is permissible, but officers are expected to keep the length of call to a minimum.

Use of mobile phones is permitted for users who have been issued with a Council mobile, for making work calls and logging of expenses, annual leave, sickness absence and any other work-related affairs.

The Council's policy is that using a mobile phone (even hands free) while driving is not allowed.

It is important that drivers understand how to use a satnav safely and avoid using it when it may be dangerous. Drivers should always input their destination details or update the satnav system while stationary and not while driving.

For further information please see [Section D of the Health & Safety Manual](#)

12.2 Information Technology (IT) systems

The Council has an obligation and legal responsibility to ensure that the IT system is used appropriately and is not misused. We monitor use to ensure that misuse or abuse of the facility is identified. All officers are required to comply with the [IT and Information Security policies](#), procedures and published guidance on Our Surrey and locally in schools.

The Council fully supports [Hybrid Working policy](#) and recognises that some officers are not working full time from Council premises, it is essential that Council laptops are only used for Council work and not for private or other external use. School staff should follow local guidance.

12.3 Intellectual property

Officers should be aware that "intellectual property" such as ideas, documents, software, etc. created during their employment belong to the Council. Any invention, improvement or design made or conceived by them while they are engaged to work for the Council which is within the existing or contemplated scope of the Council business, shall become and remain the exclusive property of the Council.

Officers must also ensure that they do not breach the copyright held by others and thereby expose the Council to the risk of claims. If they wish to copy the work of others, they should ensure that they comply with copyright law, seeking advice from their manager if they are unsure.

13. Use of Social Media

Posting information or views about local government or politics in general may not be isolated from an officer's working life, if they have identified themselves as an officer of the Council.

The image projected on social media may adversely reflect on the image of the Council. We recommend that when using social media officers remember our values. If they identify themselves as an officer of the Council, or if they can be identified as an officer of the Council, ensure any communication that they make will not:

- bring the organisation into disrepute or seriously affect public confidence in its ability to deliver effective services, for example by criticising the Council's decisions and/or activities connected with their own work
- breach confidentiality, for example by revealing confidential information owned by the organisation.
- be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by making offensive or derogatory comments
- breach the Council's Code of Conduct, its policies, its procedures and political neutrality.

Trade Unions and their elected and accredited representatives may be approached through social media for comments on a particular issue. In such cases, the representative must make it clear that they are doing so in their capacity as a representative of that union and not as a Surrey County Council officer, and that their comments may not represent the views or policy of the Council.

14. Approvals

Where officers require approval under this Code, they must always obtain this from their Assistant Director / Headteacher, or from their line manager if they are an Assistant Director, Director, or Executive Directors. The Chief Executive will obtain approval from either the Monitoring Officer, or the Section 151 Officer. Where a Headteacher requires approval under the code, then this will be obtained from the Chair of Governors.

15. If in doubt

It is not possible to cover every situation an officer of the Council may face. If they are in any doubt about anything contained within this Code or are concerned about anything relating to their personal position, they should speak to their line manager.

16. Relevant Legislation

A Code of Conduct ensures adherence to the [Equality Act 2010](#), fostering a culture of equality and respect within the organisation. The Equality Act provides legal protection against discrimination in the workplace and broader society.

17. Other Resources

Mandatory E-learning modules on the Council's eLearning platform, Olive

18. Related Policies and Procedures

[The Seven Principles of Standard Life](#)

[Statement of Health and Safety policy](#)

[Health and Safety Hub](#)

[Drug and Alcohol policy](#)

[Smoke-free Workplace policy](#)

[The Duty Of Candour](#)

[Managing Information - your responsibilities](#)

[Working Time Regulations policy](#)

[Conflict of Interest](#)

[Whistleblowing policy](#)

[Council's Strategy Against Fraud and Corruption \(Anti-bribery and Anti-money laundering\)](#)

[Domestic Abuse policy](#)

[Ending Bullying and Harassment policy](#)

[Politically restricted positions](#)

[Equality, diversity and inclusion - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

[Procurement and Contract Standing Orders](#)

[Gifts and Hospitality policy](#)

[Section D of the Health & Safety Manual](#)

[IT and Information Security policies](#)

[Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services - England](#)

19. Glossary

Acronym or term	Definition
SCC	Surrey County Council. May also be referred to as the Council
Disciplinary	Actions taken to address misconduct within the organisation.