Employee Conduct Policy



**South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council**

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# Change Record­­

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# Introduction

## Purpose

This document details the councils Employee Conduct Policy & Procedure.

## Scope

This Policy applies to any permanent or temporary employee of the council(s), Contractors/Agency Workers, and staff on casual contracts.

This document supersedes any previously existing or alternative policies, agreements or arrangements relating to Employee Conduct Policy & Procedure at the council.

## Contractual Status

This policy forms part of your contract of employment. The councils are entitled to introduce minor and non-fundamental changes to this policy by notifying you of these changes in writing. The council will consult all employees on any major changes to the policy.

## Alternative formats

Please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Strategic HR Team if you would like this policy in an alternative format, via: hradminandpayroll@southandvale.gov.uk

* 1. Relevant legislation
* Employee Rights Act 1996
* Equalities Act 2010
* Freedom of Information Act 2000
* The Local Government Act 1972
* The Seven Principles of Public Life 1995
* Working Times Regulations 1998

# Policy

## Summary

This policy outlines the conduct that is expected from council employees, contractors, agency staff and those on casual contracts. This policy does not apply to Councillors. It covers conflicts of interests, political restrictions and refers to the behaviour, principles, accountability and working practices you are expected to demonstrate.

Failure to adhere to the steps outlined in this policy may result in further action, including the application of disciplinary or grievance proceedings. The process followed will be dependent on your employment status, as well as the type of behaviour exhibited.

As the council(s) adopt temporary measures and receive permanent requests to work from home, individuals are reminded that the conduct stipulated in this Policy applies to your home as a working location.

## Behavioural Conduct

It is essential that you treat everyone you have contact with at work with respect and carry out your work in a way that gives your colleagues and the public confidence in your integrity. Any suspicion of a lack of honesty or impartiality, even if unfounded, can damage the reputation of the councils and your personal credibility. The councils follow the principle that openness is the most effective way of avoiding any questioning of employees’ conduct. As local government staff, you are expected to practice The Seven Principles of Public Life (1995). Further information can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2).

Individuals should:

* establish and maintain respectful relationships with colleagues, other council employees and members of the public
* treat all others with fairness and dignity, and act in an inclusive and open manner
* accept responsibility for their own actions
* act solely in terms of the public interest
* display professional and personal integrity always
* take decisions impartially and fairly, without discrimination or bias, both openly and transparently
* avoid the use of language or discussion that could cause insult to others
* challenge others if they suspect their behaviour to be discriminatory, unlawful, or unethical
* actively participate in meetings, as appropriate for their role and meeting held
* be punctual, unless a relevant reason for not being so is provided

Managers should also:

* encourage an open and supportive relationship with their staff
* communicate fairly across their team members
* promote and model the behaviours within this policy, and be willing to challenge poor behaviour

Please note the above are not exhaustive lists, and the councils expect all individuals to act in a responsible manner.

## Conduct at your place of work

### Dress code and standards of appearance

The councils do not have a strict dress code policy, although you are expected to attend work (both on and offsite) in clothing suitable for the tasks you are carrying out. This should be at your discretion, and whilst modest casual wear is encouraged this should be both within reason (e.g. no offensive logos/words, no political attire, no beach wear) and suitable for the nature of your work.

Where provided, safety equipment or clothing must be worn as instructed. You must not tamper with any such equipment and must bring any defects to the attention of your manager immediately.

### Identification

You must wear your Council ID badge at all times while on council premises. For the protection of the public and staff, you should be easily identifiable whilst working in the community. When making visits to premises of the public, or other site inspections, you must present your official council identification.

### Phone use at work

Please remember that use of your office phone for personal calls/texts should generally be avoided (this does not include emergency situations). Texting or using the internet on your personal devices should be kept to a minimum whilst working, excluding lunch breaks. Personal calls during work time should also be kept to a minimum. If a longer personal call is unavoidable, you should account for this on your annualised hours timesheet.

## Conduct outside of work

There are some occasions where something you do outside of work could lead to disciplinary action being taken against you, including dismissal. You need to be mindful that others may view your actions as an act carried out by a council employee. The perception or potential perception will be considered as well as the specific action itself.

This includes but is not limited to:

* losing your driving license due to road offences, meaning you can no longer carry out your job
* unacceptable behavior at a work-related event
* action that brings the council(s) into disrepute. For example, inappropriate comments on social media (see section 2.4.1)
* a criminal conviction meaning that it is inappropriate for you to continue in your employment

### Social Media

Regardless of whether you use social media for work or do not mention the council(s) on your account, something you write can easily be linked back to the council(s). If you bring the council(s) into disrepute through your use of social media (whether deliberately or inadvertently), this may result in disciplinary action.

Please follow the below guidelines when using social media:

* do not post any offensive, abusive, or threatening messages on personal social media accounts
* do not post any politically affiliated messages on personal social media accounts
* do not write anything that may reflect badly on you and/or the council(s), or which may affect council confidentiality
* avoid commenting publicly on work the councils are doing, or about stories concerning the councils. Any comments you make may not always be representative of the facts and the public or press may misconstrue your personal view as the official council stance (see section 2.5)
* do not use any official council logos or branding on personal social media pages
* remember that once information has been published it is instantly available and can be difficult to remove. Only publish something that you would be happy for you and others to read again in the future

If you see an issue occurring on social media that may concern the councils, please let the Communications team know as soon as possible.

### Use of council property

You must not use property, vehicles, or other facilities of the councils for personal use unless you have received appropriate authorisation to do so.

You may access social networking sites using council systems and your own devices for personal use before or after work hours, or during your lunch break. You should not be accessing social networking sites for non-work purposes during work time. Council properties/ systems should not be used to access inappropriate sites at any time. Council-provided phones should not be used to access any paid for sites.

## Talking to the media

You should be conscious of the sensitivity of some requests for council-related information from the media. If you are approached directly by a reporter or journalist, please do not respond to any questions but immediately refer them to the Communications team who will then coordinate a response.

## Working in a second job

You need to declare any secondary employment or private paid work to the council. Details of how to do this can be found in section 3.1. If you are taking on volunteering outside of your role at the council, please refer to the Volunteering policy and subsequent process, found on Jarvis.

The councils will then review this and discuss with you further to ensure that:

* The work does not conflict with the council’s interests or cause any member of the public to doubt your integrity as a council employee, including the ability to maintain political neutrality
* Your performance in your role at the council(s) will not be impacted, including unreasonable demands on your time and energy
* All reasonable steps are taken to ensure you do not work above an average of 48 hours per week, as per the Working Time Regulations (1998)

Your request to undertake secondary work could be refused by the council(s) due to the reasons above, or other based on your specific circumstances.

You should also be aware of any tax and National Insurance implications having a secondary employment or private paid work may have to you.

### All employees

You should not undertake private work on council premises or use equipment owned by the councils for unrelated private work, even if this is confined to non-working hours.

If your secondary employment means that your average total working week is more than 48 hours you will need to voluntarily opt out of the Working Time Regulations, which limits employees to a maximum 48 hour working week. You will need to confirm this in writing and will also need to be aware of the restrictions on the length of working days included in the Working Time Regulations.

### Political neutrality

All employees should treat all political groups and councillors fairly and consistently. Political neutrality must be maintained, and your personal or political opinions should not interfere with your work. You should not advise on matters which are political party business.

### Working on elections

Employees may be given the opportunity to carry out electoral work for the electoral registration officer or returning officer. You will be informed in advance as to whether this may be carried out in work time or in your own time. Employees must always act impartially and not express any political views or favour towards a particular party or candidate. The leave policy gives details of how you should record your time working on elections.

## Responsibility for council funds

If you have direct responsibility for a budget or for spending or distributing council funds you need to ensure that you always act in lawfully and responsibly. You must have an appropriate audit trail demonstrating that financial transactions you have taken have been carried out appropriately.

You should generate as much value for money as possible and always keep in mind that the income you are working with is public money. Getting value for money does not necessarily restrict you to the cheapest option. Sometimes a higher short-term investment can lead to longer term financial rewards or better productivity, but the justification for a greater immediate investment should always be clear and accessible.

Every local authority is required to have a nominated individual to take overall responsibility for the financial affairs of the council and the distribution of financial information. This person is termed the Section 151 officer (after section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972) or chief financial officer. At South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils, this role is held by the Head of Finance. If you have any concerns about the management of council funds you can address them to the Section 151 officer.

## Confidential proceedings of committees

You must not communicate any exempt or confidential proceedings of any committee meeting or council business to the public nor the contents of any document unless required by law or expressly authorised to do so.

# Procedure

## Declaring an interest

You can declare an interest on Jarvis [here.](http://savspvlpebs02.capitacouncilspartnership.co.uk:8080/ebauth/ufsmain?formid=REGISTER_OF_INTERESTS&null)

* You will be prompted to log in before completing the page; this is the same login as used for your PC.
* Complete the details are requested, providing as much detail regarding your declaration of interest as possible.
* Your manager will need to approve your entry and may confer with your head of service.