

Meeting of the Council – 8th October, 2012

Report of the Audit and Standards Committee

Code of Conduct for Employees

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the current position concerning the Code of Conduct for Employees.

Background

2. On 13th October, 2011, the former Standards Committee approved the current position concerning the Code of Conduct for Employees.
3. Following an internal review, which has taken place over the last 10 months, the Code of Conduct for Employees has now come under the umbrella of the Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development Division in line with other policies and procedures relating to employees. As a result of a review of the Code a number of suggested amendments are included in the attached Appendix 1 (in bold italics) to address the following points:-
 - To clarify the expectations of Council employees and that a breach of the Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary action (see paragraph 3).
 - To strengthen the link that a breach of another HR policy may also lead to a breach of the Code of Conduct where necessary.
 - To clarify that an employee's private life may impact on their working life, particularly in relation to social networking. There are also links to the Social Media Policy (see paragraphs 17, 18, 19 and 20).
 - To reinforce the Principal Statement of Employment by aligning it with the Code of Conduct (see paragraphs 6, 7, 10 and 55).
 - To clarify the standards of behaviour expected of Council employees (see paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).
 - To clarify the requirements of employees in roles that require CRB clearance should they be charged or convicted during employment. The Council's policy for 3 yearly CRB renewals is also reinforced (see paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12).
 - To clarify the standards set by professional bodies and its relationship to the standards set by the Council (see paragraphs 8 and 49).

- To clarify that documents written by employees in the course of employment for the Council are owned by the Council (see paragraph 56).
 - To confirm the correct procedures when public communication on behalf of the Authority is required (see paragraphs 57 and 58).
4. The Code of Conduct for Employees has been consulted on with the HR Policy Group, Assistant Directors Group, Corporate Equality and Leadership Group, Trade Unions and Corporate Board.
 5. It is important that employees are aware of the contents of the policy and of the implications of not following it, as it may be used for disciplinary purposes. HR will therefore communicate the new Code of Conduct to Directorate Management Teams in November for an implementation date of 1st December 2012. The following means of communication will also be utilised:
 - a. Team Meetings
 - b. Message of the Day
 - c. Yourself message
 - d. Message on payslips
 - e. New principal statements being issued
 - f. Use of established communication channels set up with employees who do not have access to ICT
 - g. Executive Summary for Noticeboards
 6. In addition to the changes in this report, all previously agreed amendments to the Code have been implemented and incorporated in the Constitution.
 7. The Localism Act 2011 has made no separate provisions affecting the Council's Officer Code of Conduct. Subject to the recommended amendments in this report, the existing Code for Employees will therefore remain operational until such time as any national code or other amendments are introduced.
 8. At its meeting on 20th September, 2012, the Audit and Standards Committee recommended the Council to adopt the revised Code of Conduct for Employees as set out in the Appendix.

Finance

9. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Law

10. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its various statutory functions.

Equality Impact

- 11. Paragraph 64 of the Code refers to equality and there are no particular issues arising from this report with regard to children and young persons.

Recommendation

- 12. That the Council adopt the revised Code of Conduct for Employees as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

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Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee

Code of Conduct for Employees

Introduction

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees of Dudley Council. It is therefore important that you understand your roles and responsibilities whilst at work. It is also important, where necessary for you to understand how your behaviour and activities outside work may impact upon your ability to do your work during working hours.

This Code of Conduct is based on the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, the provisions of the general law as well as your conditions of service.

As the Code applies to all employees, please take time to read it fully and ensure that your conduct is at all times consistent with its requirements. This document forms part of your contract of employment and you are required to comply with its contents. School staff employed by Governors will be subject to separate rules. Democratic local government can not be taken for granted – all of us involved in the service have to make a special effort to retain public confidence. Compliance with the Code will help maintain the reputation of local government in Dudley.

I am sure I can rely on you all to play your part in up-holding the highest standards in public life.

John Polychronakis
Chief Executive

Standards

- 1 Dudley Council's employees are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public and where it is part of their duties, to provide appropriate advice to Elected Members and fellow employees with impartiality. Employees will be expected, through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service. Employees must report to the appropriate manager any impropriety or breach of procedure.

In summary employees are required to:

- Attend work in a condition where they are able to carry out their duties safely and effectively
- Act honestly
- Act with dignity and treat all others with dignity and respect
- Be committed to delivering quality services to service users
- Understand and act in accordance with the Council's vision and values as set out in the Council Plan, policy and procedures
- Work in accordance with the terms and conditions of their principal statement of employment and job description
- Understand and apply the Council's rules, policies and procedures applicable to them and their role

Standards of Behaviour

Personal conduct and behaviour in the workplace

- 2 ***Employees are expected to treat members of the public, Elected Members and colleagues, with dignity and respect, this is expected in the manner in which they communicate whether verbal or written.***

More specifically employees must:

- ***Ensure that their conduct is not discriminatory, bullying or harassing to others***
- ***Ensure that their behaviour and performance meets workplace standards at any time that they are at work, representing the Council or are likely to be identified or associated with their role as a public official (whether or not they are working at the time)***
- ***Make sure that they are familiar with and follow the Council's equality policies and aim to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.***

Misconduct

- 3 ***The Code of Conduct acts as a guide for employees on the standards expected of them when acting in good faith. This document forms part of their contract of employment and employees are required to comply with its contents. Failure to comply with the Code of Conduct may be considered to be gross misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action under the Employee Improvement and Disciplinary Procedure, including dismissal.***

Alcohol and Drugs

- 4 ***Employees must not consume alcohol, use illicit drugs or illegal substances while at work or prior to attending work if likely to impact on their ability to do their job. When an employee is on call or standby they must ensure that any alcohol consumption is within the legal limit for driving in the event that they are recalled to work. Any alcohol consumed outside of work must not affect the employee's ability to do their work.***

- 5 ***If an employee is taking legally prescribed or over-the-counter medication, they must ensure that the use of them does not affect their work performance and the safety of themselves and others. Where an employee is prescribed medication that affects their work performance their line manager should liaise with HR to consult with Occupational Health. Further guidance is available in the Substance Misuse Policy and Procedure***
<http://insidedudley/corporate/info&res/policiesguidanc /personnelpolici /substance misuse/default.htm>

Health, Safety and Well-being

- 6 ***All employees must comply with the Health and Safety Work Act 1974 and associated regulations, Guidance or Approved Codes of Practice. Employees are required to comply with the Corporate Health and Safety Policy and take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions. For specific details of the responsibilities for employees and managers reference to the Corporate Health & Safety Policy must be made***
<http://insidedudley/corporate/info&res/healthsafety /safetymanagemen /safetypolicy /default.htm>

Protecting the Council and its employees

Other Employment and conduct outside working time

- 7 ***Employees paid at grade 8 to 15 have conditions of service which require them to obtain written consent to take any outside secondary employment. This will be detailed in the employee's principal statement of employment. All employees should be clear about contractual obligations and must not take outside employment which conflicts with their position or with the Council's interests. Any additional employment must be in accordance with any legislation that may apply such as the Working Time Regulations (1998) (as amended). They must also ensure that Council time and/or resources are not utilised in connection with any approved private employment.***
- 8 ***Generally, what an employee does outside work is of their own concern (unless professional standards state otherwise), but they must avoid doing anything that might adversely affect the reputation of the Council or impact on the Council's or their profession's confidence in their ability to do their job. This includes use of social media and the Internet. If in doubt, employees should seek the advice of the Council's Monitoring Officer, Head of Communications and Public Affairs.***

Employees should be aware of the "Guide for Councillors and Officers on Organisations Outside the Council".

Criminal charges and convictions

- 9 ***Unless covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, all applicants are required to disclose any live criminal convictions or charges. Certain positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and require CRB clearance before the applicant is offered a post. Where a post is subject to a CRB clearance, employees in the post will be required to participate in further CRB checks in line with regulatory requirements and/or the Council's Policy. Please refer to the CRB Policy for further guidance.***
- 10 ***If during the course of employment with the Council an employee is charged, convicted of a crime or receives a caution or other form of reprimand in relation to a criminal offence, even if the offence does not relate to their employment, they must report the charge, conviction or caution or other form of reprimand within 5 working days to their line manager or the HR team. If they are on leave when they receive the charge, conviction or caution or other form of reprimand they must report it within 5 working days on their return from leave. Failure to notify the Council within the specified timescale may lead to disciplinary action under the Employee Improvement and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.***

11 ***Where an employee is charged, convicted of a crime, receives a caution or other form of reprimand the line manager will consult with the HR team and the Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development, who will consider the impact upon the employee's position and if there has been a breach of Council Policies and Procedures, and whether disciplinary action under the Employee Improvement and Disciplinary Procedure should be invoked, including dismissal.***

12 ***Dependent upon the employee's position, consideration must be given to whether the employee poses a risk to children, or young people or to adults who access any health and social care services and a referral through safeguarding procedures may be necessary.***

Use of Council property, facilities and equipment

13 Council facilities are to be used for Council business and for no other purpose unless the employee has their Assistant Director's approval beforehand.

14 Reasonable use of telephones and photocopiers is allowed in exceptional circumstances provided the employee has been authorised to do so by their manager. However, no paid or non council work may be carried out in the Council's time, or on the Council's premises or with the use of the Council's equipment.

15 Employees may use the internet for incidental and occasional personal use, as a recognition that familiarity with this technology is imperative to the Modernisation of Local Government. Consequently employees will be able to use the Internet during their own time for personal use i.e. during lunch breaks. Further guidance can be found in the Internet Access and Use of Emails Code of Conduct
<http://insidedudley/corporate/info&res/corporatepolici /corporateictpol /dmbcstaffintern/default.htm>.

16 ***Misuse of the internet may lead to disciplinary action taking place under the Employee Improvement and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.***
<http://insidedudley/corporate/info&res/policiesguidanc /personnelpolici /employeeimprove-1/default.htm>

Use of Social Networking Sites

17 ***For most employees the use of social networking sites is prohibited in the workplace. However, such restrictions do not apply when employees are using their own equipment in their own time. Employees must not use council equipment to access social media for personal use, unless equipment is specifically provided for this purpose.***

- 18 ***Comments and messages posted on the internet are available to millions of users worldwide to view and employees of Dudley Council should be aware of this when posting information or making comments that might relate directly or indirectly about their work, customers of the council and work colleagues. Employees who do not directly identify themselves as a Dudley Council employee when using social media for personal purposes at home, should be aware that the content they post on social media websites could still be construed as relevant to their employment at Dudley Council. For example employees must not write or report on conversations, meetings or matters that are meant to be private or internal to Dudley Council. The Council has a duty of care towards its employees and would therefore treat any comments or messages posted on websites which cause offence seriously. This includes messages and comments posted in the employees own time that relate to fellow colleagues and the workplace, even when Dudley Council may not have been specifically referred to but may be linked to the comments.***
- 19 ***Care should be taken to ensure that there is nothing posted that could bring the Council into disrepute or would be potentially dangerous. Posting of defamatory or potentially damaging comments about the Council, its employees or clients would be considered gross misconduct. Posts of either nature on to the internet or social networking sites may lead to disciplinary action for misconduct/gross misconduct under the Employee Improvement and Disciplinary Procedure. A referral through safeguarding procedures may also be necessary.***
- 20 ***Employees must not do anything including inappropriate contact/communication with children, young people or vulnerable adults that puts them in a potentially compromising situation in relation to their employment e.g. accepting friendships with any children, young people who access Dudley MBC services, or adults who access any health or social care services provided by Dudley MBC, on social networking sites. This is potentially a breach of confidence and trust as well as being unprofessional. Any inappropriate relationships within social networking sites that are brought to the Council's attention will be fully investigated and may lead to disciplinary action for misconduct/gross misconduct under the Employee Improvement and Disciplinary Procedure.***

Further information can be found in the Social Media Policy on the following link:

<http://idudley/idudley/policies-and-guidance/social-media-policy/>

Use of Authority

- 21 Employees must not use their official position, status, powers or authority to seek to improperly influence a decision or action.
- 22 Employees are expected to provide honest, impartial and comprehensive advice regardless of their personal feelings on a matter. If an employee's personal views conflict with the performance of their official duties or if they believe they cannot act impartially, they should contact their line manager and attempt to resolve the conflict.
- 23 In their role of Council employee or personal capacity, employees must not allow their personal interests to conflict with the Council's requirements or use their position to improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.
- 24 When exercising a discretionary power, employees should ensure that the power is being used properly, impartially, equitably and is consistent with relevant legislation, delegations, procedures or guidelines. In exercising any power associated with their employment, employees must ensure that they are either statutorily authorised to do so or that they have been delegated the power by a person with the necessary authority to issue the delegation.

Use of Financial Resources

- 25 Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner. They must strive to ensure value for money to the local community and to avoid legal challenge to the Council. Employees with budgetary/purchasing control must ensure that they understand and comply with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Employees must ensure that any expenditure is within the limits that they are personally authorised to incur. Failure to comply with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations may lead to disciplinary action under the Employee Improvement and Disciplinary Procedure. Standing Orders can be found on the following link: http://insidedudley/finance/purchasing/info&res/standingorders_/standingordersj-1/default.htm
- And Financial Regulations can be found on the following link: http://insidedudley/finance/audit/documents/financialregula_/financialregula-3/default.htm.

Contractors

- 26 Employees are reminded of the requirements of paragraph 5.1. of Contract Standing Orders which states that:-

“No..... officer nor any company, partnership or firm in which any officer has an interest nor any employer, nominee, spouse or other close relative of an officer, shall undertake the execution of works on behalf of the Council or shall accept an order for the supply or disposal of goods or materials from the Council or shall provide services for the Council unless such works or order for goods or materials or services have been offered or secured or provided by competitive Tender or Quotation

“Other close relative” includes a person cohabiting on a similar basis to a spouse, a civil partner, a parent, grandparent, uncle, aunt, son, daughter, grandson, grand-daughter, brother, sister, niece or nephew of the officer or their spouse or cohabitee whether the relationship is through blood, marriage or adoption.

- 27 All such relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, must be declared to Legal and Democratic Services (using a pro forma provided for this purpose) who will notify the relevant Assistant Director (or in the case of a school, the Headteacher) and any other appropriate employee of this declaration. The requirement to make a declaration under this paragraph also applies to 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 a contractor.
- 28 Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit by fair competition and no special favour may be shown to any business run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives, in the tendering process. No part of the local community may be discriminated against.

Separation of Roles During Tendering

- 29 Employees involved in the tendering process and dealing with contractors need to be clear of the separation of client and contractor roles within the Council. Senior employees who have both a client and contractor responsibility must be aware of the need for accountability and openness.
- 30 Employees in contractor or client units must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors.
- 31 Employees who are privy to confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors must not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

- 32 Employees contemplating a management buyout must, as soon as they have formed a definite intent, inform the appropriate manager and withdraw from the contract awarding processes.
- 33 Employees must ensure that no special favour is shown to current or former employees or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior or relevant managerial capacity.

Conflict of Interest

- 34 Where an employee faces a conflict between their private interests and public duties they must resolve the conflict in favour of their public duties. Where a conflict of interest is likely to occur due to their personal or immediate family private interests the employee must inform their manager, who will ensure that the Council is not compromised. This is particularly pertinent where the employee is involved in making decisions affecting contracting, tendering or regulatory functions.

Examples of possible conflicts of interests are as follows:

- Employees with access to computer databases of customers updating their own personal records or those of close relatives
- Employees being contracted to provide services to the Council outside their paid employment
- In a purchasing capacity liaising with a supplier who employs a close relative
- Generating work which involves travel to provide an opportunity to visit friends
- A supervisor who is in a position to approve higher duties or provide other benefits to a subordinate where a close personal relationship exists
- Involvement with an interview panel when a relationship exists with one of the applicants.

Personal Interests

- 35 Employees must declare to Law and Governance (using a pro forma provided for this purpose) any financial or non-financial interests, whether direct or indirect, which could conflict with the interests of the Council. This would include any cases where the employee is a company director, company secretary or voluntary organisation trustee. Law and Governance will notify the relevant Assistant Director (or in the case of a school, the Headteacher) and any other appropriate employee of this declaration.

Appointment and Other Employment Matters

- 36 Employees involved in appointments must ensure that these are made on the basis of merit. It would be unlawful for an employee to make an appointment which was based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the post. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees must not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship outside work with him or her.
- 37 Similarly, employees must not be involved in decisions relating to recruitment, discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a relative, partner, etc.

Gifts and Hospitality

- 38 Employees must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence for them to corruptly 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 as a Council employee. If an allegation is made it is for the employee to demonstrate that any such rewards have not been corruptly obtained.
- 39 Employees must only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the Council in the community. Offers to attend purely social or sporting functions must be accepted only when these are part of the life of the community or where the Council must be seen to be represented. They must be properly authorised and recorded in the Gifts and Hospitality Register maintained for this purpose by each Directorate.
- 40 When the hospitality has to be declined those making the offer need to be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operating within the Council.
- 41 Employees may accept insignificant items of token value [i.e. less than £10] such as pens, diaries, chocolates and flowers. Gifts other than pens and diaries and similar office/stationery items [valued less than £10] must be recorded in the Gifts and Hospitality Register.

Employees must not accept significant personal gifts from contractors and outside suppliers and they should notify their Director or Assistant Director of any such offers.

- 42 When receiving authorised hospitality employees need to be particularly sensitive as to its timings in relation to decisions which the Council may be taking affecting those providing the hospitality.

- 43 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 Director or Assistant Director 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 must ensure that the Council meets the cost of such visits and any meals to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions. All such matters should be recorded in the Gifts & Hospitality Register.
- 44 Employees who are bequeathed gifts or money in the will of a service user that they know from their working capacity must not accept the gifts or money unless they are insignificant items of token value (i.e. less than £10). When the gifts/money has to be declined the executor of the will needs to be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operating within the Council.

Sponsorship – Giving and Receiving

- 45 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.
- 46 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 an appropriate manager of any such interest. Similarly, where the Council through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, employees must ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

Political Neutrality

- 47 Employees serve the Council as a whole. It follows they must serve all Elected Members and not just those of the controlling group, and must ensure that the individual rights of all Elected Members are respected.
- 48 ***Employees, whether or not politically restricted, must follow every lawful expressed policy of the authority and must not allow their personal or political opinions to interfere with their work. They must be seen to be able, to remain unbiased in the performance of their duties. Failure to follow this may lead to disciplinary action under the Employee Improvement and Disciplinary Procedure.***

For further information on politically restricted posts and restrictions applied to these posts please refer to the policy on the attached link
<http://insidedudley/corporate/info&res/policiesguidanc /personnelpolici /politicallyrest-1/default.htm>

Professional and Trade Union Activity

49 ***Members of professions are expected to uphold the standards of performance and conduct set by the relevant professional association and this Code of Conduct. Employees are expected to raise any concerns they may have regarding a conflict of interest between their role at the Council and the standards of their profession.***

50 When speaking in the capacity of workplace or trade union representative or profession association, it must be made clear that the opinion is made on behalf of the union or association represented and not the Council.

Disclosure of Information

51 It is generally accepted that open government is best. The law requires that certain types of information must be available to members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. The Council itself may decide to be open about other types of information. Employees must be aware of which information their Council is and is not open about, and act accordingly.

52 In the course of their employment employees may obtain information that has not been made public and is still confidential. Employees must never disclose confidential information given in confidence by anyone, or information which they acquire which they believe may be confidential in nature, without the consent of a person authorised to give it unless they are required to do so by law.

53 Employees must not use any information obtained through their work for the Council for personal gain or benefit, nor may they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way. Any particular information received by an employee from a councillor which is personal to that councillor and does not belong to the authority must not be divulged by the employee without the prior approval of that councillor, except where such disclosure is required or sanctioned by the law.

54 ***Employees have legal obligations towards privacy and security whilst processing personal information relating to any living individual. Such information must be processed in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Code of Practice and Freedom Of Information Act 2000. Breach of confidentiality may be considered a disciplinary offence under the Employee Improvement and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.***

55 ***In the event that, during the course of their employment with the Council an employee has been employed within a traded services area and/or during their employment acquired access to confidential information relating to the trade then the following principles will apply:***

- ***The employee shall not for 6 months after the end of their employment, solicit or endeavour to entice away from the Council the custom of a client/customer with whom they have had contact with during the period of their employment, with a view to providing goods or services to that client/customer.***
- ***The employee shall not for 6 months after the end of their employment offer to employ or engage or otherwise endeavour to entice away from the Council and person employed or engaged by the Council who was involved in any capacity within the traded services area and with whom they have dealt with.***

Intellectual Property

56 ***Under copyright law the Council owns any material made by the Council or under its direction. As an employee or contractor, any material produced in the course of work belongs to the Council unless otherwise explicitly provided for in the contract of employment. Therefore, to use any work owned by the Council the employee must seek permission from their Assistant Director.***

Public communication

57 ***All media requests for information and enquiries that relate to policy and procedures and operational activities must be responded to by the Communications and Public Affairs Team.***

When making a public comment in an official capacity employees must:

- ***Ensure that it is part of their official role***
- ***Ensure that the facts are not misrepresented***
- ***Ensure that the Data Protection Act is not contravened***
- ***Respect the confidentiality of information that has not been approved for release either by Cabinet or through official Council channels.***

58 ***As private citizens employees have the same rights as members of the public to openly discuss or comment on community and social issues. Employees must make it clear that when commenting in this capacity that it is their personal opinion and not that of the Council and they are not abusing their position of knowledge gained from their role as a council officer.***

Internal Audit

- 59 Where an internal audit is conducted on a function all employees are required to contribute to this work. Where an employee has been identified in an agreed action plan to carry out some work, it is their responsibility to ensure that it is undertaken within the agreed timescale.

Ways of Working

Working with Elected Members

- 60 Employees are responsible to the Council through its senior managers. For some, their role is to give advice to Elected Members and senior managers and all are there to carry out the Council's work. Mutual respect between employees and Elected Members is essential to good local government.

Employees dealing with Elected Members should be aware of the "Protocol for Relationships between Members and Officers of Dudley MBC" as set out in the Constitution.

Working with Local Community and Service Users

- 61 Employees must always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within that community as defined by the policies of the Council.

Agile Working

- 62 Through modernisation of the Council's workforce and working arrangements, the relationship between the Council and its employees relies ever more heavily upon trust and the management of outcomes rather than presence at an office base, where applicable. Any abuse of the policies, procedures, guidance and or flexibility afforded will be fully investigated and may lead to disciplinary action being taken. Please refer to the Agile Working Policy for further information.

Whistleblowing

- 63 ***Since 1999 the Council has had a policy on confidential reporting, i.e., whistleblowing. Under this policy employees who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Council's work are encouraged to come forward and voice those concerns. A copy of the policy can be obtained from your directorate or the Director of Corporate Resources or on the attached link.***
<http://insidedudley/corporate/info&res/policiesguidanc /otherpoliciespr /confidentia lrep-1/default.htm>

The policy explains the procedure for raising concerns internally or, if preferred, employees may seek free independent and confidential help from the charity, Public Concern at Work.

Equality Issues

- 64 All Dudley Council's employees must ensure that our policies and practices relating to equality issues are complied with in addition to the requirements of the law. All members of the local community, customers and other employees have the right to be treated with fairness and equity.

Interpretation

- 65 If an employee is unsure about any aspect of the Code of Conduct they must raise this with their line manager immediately. Employees of the Council who disagree with the interpretation of this document (as it may affect them) have the right to raise the matter through the Council's Official Grievance Procedure.