



Code of Conduct

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This policy supersedes all previous issues.

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1. Purpose and Scope

1.1. The purpose of the Officer Code of Conduct:

- Ensure all employees of Ryedale District Council are aware of what is expected of them and that we do everything possible to uphold the highest possible standards of conduct at all times.
- The public, partner organisations and Elected Members are entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees who work for Ryedale District Council.
- This policy applies to all employees of Ryedale District Council.

1.2. Disregarding this code will, in certain circumstances, result in potential disciplinary action being taken. The code will be taken into consideration when measuring against conduct.

2. Core Principles

2.1. The core principles at Ryedale District Council underpin all work that is carried out. All work and behaviour, in any capacity, is expected to be carried out in accordance with these principles and in conjunction with the behaviours framework.

2.2. The Core Principles are:

- **Selflessness** - Employees should take decisions solely in the terms of the public interest. They should not do so nor use their position in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
- **Integrity** - Employees should not place themselves under any financial or other obligations to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity** - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, employees should make decisions on merit.
- **Accountability** - Employees are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness** - Employees should be as open as possible about all decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it.

- **Honesty** - Employees have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Respect for Others** - Employees must treat other people with respect and not discriminate unlawfully or unfairly against any person. They must treat Councillors and other co-opted Members of the authority professionally.
- **Trust** - Employees must, at all times, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place on them. Employees must use any public money or service users' money entrusted to or handled by them, in a responsible and lawful manner and not make personal use of the Council resources unless properly authorised to do so.
- **Leadership** - Employees should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

3. Core Standards

All employees are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public. It is the duty of each employee to report to the appropriate manager any breach of Policy or concern that the Policy is being breached. These core principles link in to those identified in the People and Culture plan.

3.1. Gifts and Hospitality

- 3.1.1 Employees may from time to time, in the course of their work, encounter situations where individuals or organisations may offer gifts or hospitality. Casual low value gifts offered to employees by contractors, organisations, firms or individuals such as calendars, diaries, mouse mats, pens and other small gifts need not be declared. These should be received on a single occasion only and repeated offers should be declined.
- 3.1.2 If you are presented with a gift or offer of hospitality you must seek authorisation in advance, where possible, from your Line Manager or next most appropriate Senior Manager who will record every request on the relevant form.
- 3.1.3 All gifts and hospitality, whether accepted or refused, should be reported to your Line Manager, Service Lead or above and recorded on an OCC1 Form (Appendix B).
- 3.1.4 It is a serious criminal offence 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. If an allegation is made it is for the employee to demonstrate that any such rewards have not been corruptly obtained.

- 3.1.5 All employees should refer to **Appendix A** when deciding whether or not it is appropriate to accept a gift. If in doubt, seek advice from your Line Manager.

3.2 Sponsorship – Giving and Receiving

- 3.2.1. If an organisation wants to sponsor a local government activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the guidelines as stated in 3.1 apply. Particular care and consideration must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.
- 3.2.2 If the council sponsors an event or service, no employee must directly benefit from the sponsorship without full disclosure to the relevant Senior Manager/Chief Executive. If the Council give support, by any means, in the community, all advice must be impartial and there must be no conflict of interest.
- 3.2.3 All disclosures must be completed on an OCC3 Form (Appendix D) and given to the relevant Senior Manager/Chief Executive.

3.3 Use of Financial Resources

- 3.3.1 All employees must ensure that public funds are used in a responsible and lawful manner at all times. Employees must strive to ensure value for money to the local community to avoid the risk of legal challenge to the Council.
- 3.3.2 Employees must follow Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and operating procedures and advise management where they consider changes can be made to increase value for money.

3.4 Use of Council Facilities

- 3.4.1 Access to organisational equipment, such as computers, laptops, mobile phones, works vehicles etc. is provided for work purposes and use of this should be respected and not abused.
- 3.4.2 If you have access to computer information at work you will also be issued instructions about computer security and proper use of the computer. It is each individual's responsibility to care of your computer password which should not be shared, and any materials you are using, 'lock' your computer if you are going to leave your terminal unattended, and dispose carefully of any unwanted documents using the paper waste or confidential waste as appropriate.
- 3.4.3 Further details are available in the ICT Policy.

3.5 Intellectual Property

- 3.5.1 Intellectual property means product of the mind, for example inventions, designs, trade-marks, creative writings, programs and drawings, and in this instance is in relation to any such product produced as a direct result of your employment with the organisation and during the course of your employment. (Referred to in short as 'inventions'). It will normally be the case that the ownership of all 'inventions' and the copyright of all written material created

during work for the Council, belong to the Council. If in any doubt employees must seek further guidance from Legal Services.

3.6 Political Neutrality

- 3.6.1 Local Government Officers involved in advising elected members of their authority should be seen to observe a policy of political neutrality. All employees must follow the Officer Code and also must be politically neutral at all times.
- 3.6.2 A list of all politically restricted posts can be obtained from the corporate governance department.
- 3.6.3 Employees, whether or not holding politically restricted posts, must follow every lawful expressed policy of Ryedale District Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.
- 3.6.4 Employees should familiarise themselves with the Protocol for Member and Officer Relations which can be found on the intranet.

3.7 Other Employment & External Activities

- 3.7.1 Employees must not undertake any type of private work which conflicts with the Council's interests or prevents any employee from fulfilling the terms of their employment contract. All employees must declare an interest where a conflict may arise.
- 3.7.2 All employees of Ryedale District Council must notify their Line Manager, Service Lead or above before undertaking any additional work, paid or unpaid. This must be documented on an OCC2 Form (Appendix C).
- 3.7.3 Employees must not:
 - Do private work during working hours, on Council premises or use Council equipment.
 - Undertake any private work which prevents them from carrying out their duties with the Council or including any requirements to do contractual overtime.
 - Undertake private work for any person, firm or company if it will involve the Council.
 - Prepare or assist with any applications, for example planning or building, in any private capacity if you deal with these normally.
 - Access Council services, unless you declare your employment in writing and submit via your Line Manager.
 - Undertake private work for any person, firm or company who have a contractual relationship with or who are commissioned by the Council for any type of work, unless they have written permission from their Head of Service to do so and there is no conflict of interest.
 - Undertake private work for another employee responsible for supervising you or whom you supervise, or for an elected member of the Council, unless

they have written permission from their Head of Service to do so and there is no conflict of interest.

- 3.7.4 You should ensure you understand and comply with both Working Time Regulations and Health and Safety regulations before considering other employment. Any member of staff working more than 48 hours per week across more than one job (whether within or outside of Ryedale District Council) will need to ensure they have agreed to this by signing an 'opt out' form. Any such queries should be discussed with Human Resources.

3.8 Personal Interests including Financial and Non-Financial Interests

- 3.8.1 Employees must declare in writing, initially to their immediate Line Manager or appropriate Senior Manager:

- Any financial or non-financial interests that they consider could bring about conflict with the Council's interests, e.g. being involved in an official capacity with an outside organisation.
- Any financial interest which could conflict with the Council's interests, e.g. work for which a fee is received.
- Employees must declare membership of any secret societies. The definition of "secret society" is as follows:

"Any Lodge, Chapter, Society, Trust or regular gathering or meeting which:

- Is not open to members of the public who are not members
- Includes in the granting of membership a requirement of the member to make a commitment (whether by oath or otherwise) of allegiance.
- Includes, whether initially or subsequently, a commitment (whether by oath or otherwise) of secrecy in regard to rules, membership or conduct."

- 3.8.2 In the case of a Senior Manager (Grade12 or above), such a declaration must be made to the Chief Executive.

- 3.8.3 Where employees have declared an interest in regard to section 3.8.1 the detail will be kept in a register by the Council's Monitoring Officer. The information is not available to the public but is accessible by other officers who have a 'need to know'.

3.9 Relationships

- 3.9.1 Employees must remember their responsibility to the community they serve, remaining courteous, efficient and impartial in their service delivery to all groups and individuals with whom they come into contact.

- 3.9.2 Officers should avoid close personal familiarity with individual councillors, service users, customers or clients maintaining professionalism and mutual

respect, with the aim to avoid identifying conflicts of interest that would bring the individual and/or Authority into disrepute.

3.9.3 Employees should disclose if they are working with anyone in a professional capacity who is a relative or with whom they have a close personal relationship with outside of work. This also extends to relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors or potential contractors. The disclosure should be made to their line manager promptly for their consideration on an OCC3 Form (Appendix D).

3.9.4 Working Together

It is expected everyone will;

- Comply with all the Council's Policies and Procedures.
- Maintain a high level of confidentiality and professionalism at all times.
- Work with others to achieve a fast and effective resolution to any conflict arising between staff.
- Demonstrate polite and courteous behaviour to all colleagues, customers and elected members at all times.
- Ensure the needs of internal and external customers and Councillors are paramount and are met to their satisfaction.
- Bring concerns to the attention of Managers, using the most appropriate method deemed necessary.
- Take responsibility for their own health and safety and assist in maintaining the security and safety of the council and its staff.
- Take personal responsibility for, and pride in, the Council environment.
- Maintain an awareness of Council issues through communication channels including briefings and newsletters.
- Ensure all staff for whom you are responsible are kept informed and are encouraged to feedback to you on Council, departmental or individual issues.

3.10 Employee Concerns and Members

3.10.1 It is not appropriate for Council Officers to lobby Members on matters of individual concern about their employment, operational issues or future policy decisions and Members should discourage Officers from making such approaches. A member of staff who is unhappy about a matter affecting them personally should be encouraged to take this up with their line manager. If they are not happy with the response the next step is to talk to their trade union or senior manager. The Council's Resolving Issues at Work Procedure is available if informal methods have not resolved the issue.

3.11 Disclosure of Information

3.11.1 Ryedale District Council believes 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

ensure that they know what that information is and seek advice and guidance from line managers where this is not clear.

- 3.11.2 Employees must 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, other than in circumstances which have been agreed.
- 3.11.3 Any particular information received by an employee from a Councillor which is personal to that Councillor and which does not belong to the Council, should not be divulged by the employee without the prior approval of that Councillor, except where such disclosure is required by law.

3.12 Compliance with the Code

- 3.12.1 It is important that local government Officers are exemplary in their conduct at work. Non-compliance with this Code will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy.
- 3.12.2 Employees who consider other employees to be guilty of misconduct must report this to their Line Manager or raise it through one of the other available procedures e.g. Resolving Issues at Work.
- 3.12.3 Employees must not treat employees who report (or who intend to report or are suspected of reporting) potential misconduct any less favourably than other employees.
- 3.12.4 If, in some instances, the employee cannot make use of the existing procedures for any reason then they should raise complaints or genuine matters of concern with the relevant person through the Speak Out Policy.

3.13 Social Media

- 3.13.1 All use of social media and the internet on Council equipment is monitored and any misuse in relation to social media which is brought to the Council's attention, will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action.
- 3.13.3 Personal accounts set up by staff on social media, whilst unable to be influenced by the Council, are subject to the ICT Standards of Conduct policy to ensure employees of Ryedale District Council do not bring the Council into disrepute.
- 3.13.4 Employees who use social media for recreational purposes must still adhere to this policy and must not do anything in their own personal time that would bring the Council into disrepute. Staff must not use Council E-mail addresses when using social media for their own personal use.
- 3.13.5 Employees must not divulge or comment on any information gained in the course of their work, and relating to any groups or individuals the Council provides a service to, on any social media outlet.

3.14 Contact with the Press and Media

- 3.14.1 Employees are not permitted to give reports or speak to the press and media, unless this is an aspect which is clearly required within their role, on matters relating to their employment within the Council or Council decisions. Employees with this responsibility must guard themselves against declaring a view which is contrary to a position taken by the Council and which may be deemed to be critical of that decision.
- 3.14.2 In the event of an industrial dispute involving Trade Union organisations, an elected representative of that Trade Union may be called upon by the press or media to comment on the dispute. Where a decision is taken by that Trade Union organisation to respond, employees acting in a union capacity should exercise great care in presenting their response.
- 3.14.3 In all circumstances, employees are under a general duty of care to avoid, wherever practicable, a conflict of interest arising and should not undertake to criticise, damage or act in any way against the best interests of the Council. Should this occur, then the employee will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the agreed procedures.

3.15 Smoking/Smoking Cessation

- 3.15.1 Ryedale District Council has a Smoke Free Workplace Policy. Employees are reminded that if found smoking (including e-cigarettes) in unauthorised areas of the Council premises in contravention of the policy, it will be regarded as a disciplinary offence.
- 3.15.2 Employees must only smoke within designated 'smoke areas' of Council buildings, which will be defined by Managers responsible for Health & Safety.
- 3.15.3 Employees are reminded that they are prohibited from smoking or vaping within works vehicles/pool cars etc.
- 3.15.4 Health & Wellbeing Services offer additional information to promote and support a healthy lifestyle and specific information regarding smoking cessation.

3.16 Drugs and Alcohol

- 3.16.1 Staff believed to be under the influence of non-prescription or illegal drugs or alcohol during working hours will be asked to leave the premises with immediate effect for their own safety, as well as that of colleagues and members of the public using Council services. Staff should be reminded that consumption of non-prescription or illegal drugs and alcohol during work time is a contravention of this policy and may result in disciplinary action and potential dismissal from post.
- 3.16.2 Staff that are prescribed prescription drugs by a medical professional which may affect their ability to drive or operate machinery and are required to do so as part of their employment, must notify their line manager with immediate effect.

3.16.3 Staff that are prescribed any medication by a medical professional that has significant side effects should notify their line manager with immediate effect so that reasonable adjustments can be made where possible. In such circumstances, occupational health advice may be sought.

3.16.4 Health & Wellbeing Services offer additional information to promote and support a healthy lifestyle and specific information regarding drug and alcohol issues.

3.17 Safeguarding

3.17.1 All employees have a responsibility in relation to safeguarding any customers, clients or service users that they come into contact with throughout the course of their employment with Ryedale District Council. All staff should undertake Safeguarding training as part of their induction. Further training will be provided to those working in specific areas where deeper knowledge of safeguarding is required.

3.17.2 Any concerns that employees have in relation to safeguarding concerns should be raised via the appropriate channels, details of which are available on the intranet or by raising such concerns with your line manager.

3.18 Police investigations, allegations, convictions or cautions

3.18.1 Employees who are the subject of a police investigation, allegations, convictions, cautions or reprimand must notify their line manager at the earlier opportunity of the situation. Staff are responsible for keeping their line manager and/or HR up to date with any progress on such cases. Each case will be assessed on its own merits as to whether it is appropriate for the employee to remain in employment during the course of the police investigation. HR advice should be sought in all such cases and should be kept up to date with progress.

3.19.2 Driving offences need only be declared where an employee may face losing their driving licence and there is a requirement for them to drive as part of their employment.

4. Policies, Regulations and Standards Relevant to Specific Services

In determining acceptable standards, Officers are asked to familiarise themselves not only with those included in the Officer Code of Conduct but also those included in Service Specific Codes, corporate policies and/or operational procedures used by their own Services. A copy of all the above mentioned documents can be found on the Intranet or requested via their Line Manager.

GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

Checklist for considering whether to accept a gift or hospitality.

The question in all cases is one of judgement, and the following checklist of queries should help you to decide whether a gift or an offer of hospitality should be accepted or tactfully declined.

- A. Is the value of the gift or hospitality £10 or over?
- B. If under £10 is it intended as an inducement?
- C. Is the extent of the hospitality, or nature of the gift reasonable and appropriate?
- D. Does the donor have any form of contractual relationship with the Council, does it provide goods or services to the Council of any kind?
- E. Is the invitation/gift directed to a large group of unrelated individuals or open to the public, or have you been targeted because of your employment with the Council and the nature of your role?
- F. What do you think is the motivation behind the invitation/gift?
- G. For hospitality do you want to go and if so why? Is it because there will be genuine benefits to the Council in terms of networking and contracts gained? Or is a desire to go centred around personal enjoyment.
- H. Would acceptance of the invitation be, in any way, inappropriate or place you under pressure in relation to any current or future matter involving the Council?
- I. For gifts, is there a difficulty in returning the gift? If it would cause offence can the gift be given to charity or can you pay an equivalent price of the gift to charity?

All gifts and hospitality, whether accepted or refused, should be reported to your Line Manager, Service Lead or above and recorded in a register and on an OCC1 Form.

OCC1: Report of Offer of Gift

Name		Grade/Salary	
Job Title		Dept	
Details of Gift Offered			
Date offer received			
To whom offered?			
By whom the offer was accepted/declined			
Signature		Date	

For office use only

Date form received by Line Manager, or above	
Entered in Register on	

OCC2: Notification of Outside Employment/Volunteering

Name		Grade/Salary	
Job Title		Dept	
Nature of Outside Employment Sought			
Is the post paid or unpaid	Paid <input type="checkbox"/>	Unpaid <input type="checkbox"/>	
Does this employment, in your view, conflict with or is it detrimental to the interests of the Council or would it weaken public confidence in the conduct of the Council's business?			
Comment:			
Signature		Date	

Comments of Line Manager	
Comments of Head of Service	
Approved <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Approved <input type="checkbox"/>

OCC3: Declaration of interests

Name		Grade/Salary	
Job Title		Dept	
Line Manager			
Nature of Interest/Relationship			
Your role in any relevant business of the Council			
How might the interest, in your view, conflict with the interests of the Council?			
Comment:			
Signature		Date	

For use when declaring relationship with a Contractor:

Name and Address of Contractor		
Is this a current relationship?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If not, when did the relationship terminate?	Date	

I hereby declare that the above details correctly record any interest, which I may have, which could bring about conflict with the Council's interests.

Signature		Date	
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For office use only

Received	
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OCC4: Notice Under Section 117 Local Government Act 1972 Pecuniary Interest in Contract or Proposed Contract

Name		Grade/Salary	
Job Title		Dept	
Line Manager			
Nature of Interest			
Details of Contract or Proposed Contract with the Council			
I make the above declaration in accordance with Section 117 of the Local Government Act 1972.			
Signature		Date	

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Date completed form received by Council Solicitor and Head of Service or above	
Date notified to Line Manager, Head of Service or above	

OCC5: Register of Interests

Name		Grade/Salary	
Job Title		Dept	
Line Manager			
Nature of Interest			

	Guidance	Interest (please write NONE if you have no relevant interests)
Employer	Please indicate the name of the employer of your spouse or partner, or anyone else who lives with you who makes a significant contribution to the household income (it is not necessary to register temporary, summer or part time job of a child of the household).	
Land interest	Please provide details sufficient to describe the location of any land in which you have an interest, whether it is ownership, leasehold, a tenancy or license. If you have any rights over land you should register the address or location of that land.	
Directorships, shareholding and Company Interests	In relation to any company which is based in or may operation in Ryedale, directorships, significant shareholding (ie more than £10,000 of the nominal share value) and any position of management or control in a company. This would include a position as Company Secretary or Treasurer.	
Membership of Bodies	You need only register a position of management or control in a body. You need only register interests in bodies which are:	

	<p>A. Charities or directed to charitable purposes</p> <p>B. Bodies designed to influence public opinion – these include campaign groups. You do not need to register membership of a trade union.</p> <p>C. Bodies carrying out functions of a public nature: This is wide ranging and will include bodies that you are appointed to by the Council. You need not register membership of Partnerships (where you are there for the Council), but should include trusteeships, governing body membership and membership of a parish council (in Ryedale).</p> <p>D. Membership of secret societies. You do not need to register membership of sports associations, secret societies or other clubs and groups but you may need to DECLARE an interest in that body if you find yourself dealing with a matter, which is relevant to that body. You must register membership of a charity (the Grand Lodge of Freemasonry is a charity).</p>	
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I declare that the above is a true statement of my personal interests

Signature		Date	
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