

Ethical Framework for Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

The Council's Ethical Framework describes the set of rules and procedures within which the Council operates in order to ensure the highest possible standards of ethical behaviour and good governance. The Ethical Framework has been developed adopting the statutory provisions now contained within the Localism Act 2011 and also reflects guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government. It sets out the standards of behaviour that the Council expects of its members and staff in all areas of their conduct and also clarifies roles and responsibilities for the interaction between members and staff.

The overall Ethical Framework for the Council contains several important constituent parts, as outlined below. The Council is committed to reviewing the Framework to ensure that it is entirely "fit for purpose" and reflects all relevant best practice guidance. Responsibility for the development, implementation, monitoring and promotion of the Ethical Framework rests with the Council's Standards Committee under the guidance of the Monitoring Officer.

The principal constituent parts of the Ethical Framework are as follows:

The Constitution

The Constitution sets out the way in which the Council operates, including details as to the way in which decisions are made by the Authority and the rules and procedures to be followed to ensure that all decisions are taken in an appropriate, open and transparent manner and, in particular, in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This is also underpinned by the Legality Guide which forms part of the Council's Policies and Procedures Manual. The Council has adopted within its Constitution all relevant statutory provisions and, in addition, has agreed such further procedures as are necessary to ensure the efficient running of the Council. The Council has an established Constitution Review Working Party, which is a politically balanced group of members, to continually review and update the Constitution to ensure that all the requirements referred to within this section are complied with.

The Code of Conduct for Members

The Code adopted by the Council sets out the standards of conduct that members are required to adhere to whenever they are conducting the business of the Council, whenever they are carrying out business of the Office to which they have been elected or appointed and when they are acting as a representative of the Council. The Council has adopted a code which complies with the relevant statutory guidance made under the Localism Act 2011. The Council's Standards Committee adopted arrangements for dealing with standards allegations, procedures for investigations and procedures for hearings on 27 April 2012.

Local Code of Corporate Governance

Corporate Governance is the system by which local authorities direct and control their functions related to their communities. It is underpinned by the fundamental principles of openness, integrity and accountability. The Local Code of Corporate Governance covers the following six core principles for good governance:-

1. Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area;
2. Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;
3. Promoting the values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;
4. Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;
5. Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective;
6. Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

A Corporate Governance Action Plan will be produced to cover all areas within the Local Code and will be reported to and monitored by the Audit and Accounts Committee.

Register of Interests

The Council's Code of Conduct requires all Councillors to register their Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other interests in the Council's Register of Interests. A copy of the full register is available in the Council's offices at Moorlands House, Leek and via its website www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk.

The Protocol for Member/Officer Relations

This Protocol provides guidance on the differing role and obligations of members and that of the officers serving the Council. The standards set out in this Protocol are binding and apply equally to elected members, voting and non-voting co-opted members and to officers where there is a joint responsibility. The Protocol is contained within the Council's Constitution.

Protocol on Use of Resources by Members of the Council

A Member when using or authorising the use by others of the Authority's resources, must act in accordance with the Authority's requirements and ensure such resources are not used for political purposes.

This guidance contained in this protocol also sets out the rules relating to the use of Council facilities in connection with publicity (and guidance on the use of the internet and external email). Any breach of these requirements could result in a breach of the Council's local code of conduct for Members.

Code of Conduct for Council Employees

The Council has previously agreed a Code of Conduct for employees, which continues to form part of the Ethical Framework. In addition the Council adopted the CIPFA/SOLACE Local Public Services Senior Managers' Code of Ethics in June 2016.

Equalities and Diversity

The Council has adopted policies to ensure compliance with its statutory responsibilities under all legislation relating to the support of equalities and diversity. These policies are available within the Council's Policies and Procedures Manual available to all staff and members upon the Intranet. These policies reflect the approach taken by the Council in responding to and exceeding its statutory responsibilities in these areas, and are followed by both officers and, when appropriate, all members.

Other Supporting Codes and Protocols

The Council has produced further Codes of Conduct and these are contained within Part 5 of the Constitution. The further Codes in force are as follows:-

- ◆ Code of Practice for Members – Gifts and Hospitality
- ◆ Protocol on Planning Matters for Members and Officers
- ◆ Protocol between the District Council and its Monitoring Officer.

Statement of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's Group Leaders

This Ethical Framework has been developed by the whole Council and has the support of all political groups.

We are committed to working together to ensure compliance by all members within our groups with both the letter and spirit of the documents forming part of this Ethical Framework.

In particular, we will seek to ensure that no member within our groups behaves in such a way as to give rise to the possibility of a complaint to the Council. In the event of our being made aware of behaviour which may be considered unacceptable we will seek to resolve such matters within our groups, inviting the assistance of the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer as necessary.

We undertake to promote excellent standards of behaviour amongst all members of our groups, to ensure openness, transparency and accountability to those who elect us.