

Officers' Code of Conduct

Existing Local Code (adopted July 1995) and "Whistle-Blowing Addendum"
(adopted December 1999).

LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES

CODE OF CONDUCT

CORPORATE PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

**This code was adopted by the Council on 18 July 1995 (and amended by
the Council on 24 April 2001)**

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Public is entitled to demand of local government employees conduct of the highest standard and public confidence in their integrity would be shaken were suspicions to arise that they could in any way be influenced by improper motives.

1.2 In recognising that employees are the Council's most important asset this Code of Conduct for Employees has been adopted which sets out existing laws, regulations and conditions of service and provides guidelines which will help maintain and improve standards and protect employees from misunderstanding or criticism.

1.3 This Code covers all employees under a contract of employment with the Council, including office holders as well as former employees in respect of certain conduct matters. Employees of contractors and agencies providing a service for the Council will be subject to the same standards of conduct. The Code supplements any codes of professional bodies to which employees may belong.

1.4 This Code has been drawn up in order to maintain the highest standards of official conduct throughout the organisation. Accordingly, if any circumstances arise where there is uncertainty as to the appropriate application of the Code and/or a need for supplemental advice, the matter must be taken up with the appropriate Departmental Head.

1.5 This Code will be referred to in appropriate cases when action is being taken against employees in accordance with the Council' regulations as to Employee Discipline including Dismissal and Suspension.

2 Standards

2.1 The Council's employees are required to give the highest possible standard of service to the public and, where it is part of their duties, to provide impartial and appropriate advice to Councillors and fellow employees. Employees are required, 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.

2.2 Whilst generally employees will be expected to report without fear of recrimination to their own Departmental Head any impropriety or breach of procedure, this does not preclude an employee from referring such a matter to another Departmental Head if there are strong grounds for doing so.

2.3 The Council will undertake to investigate thoroughly all such reports and to take any remedial/disciplinary action required. However, if it is established that the report is unfounded and there has been malicious intent, appropriate action against the instigator will be considered.

2.4 Employees at all levels will be expected to behave courteously towards all other employees regardless of their status and not seek to intimidate, threaten or coerce them. Employees will be expected to obey all reasonable instructions from their managers and supervisors and to follow all normal working rules and codes of practice in relation to their employment.

3 Disclosure of information

3.1 The law requires that certain types of information must be available to Members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. The Council in supporting open government will, in addition to meeting the legal requirements, endeavour to be as open as possible about all its activities. Therefore, employees must be aware of decisions taken about information that can be made available from their work areas and act accordingly.

3.2 Employees should not use any information obtained in the course of their Council employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way unless such action has been clearly sanctioned by the appropriate Department Head.

3.3 Any information provided by a Councillor, which is not otherwise held by the Council, should not be divulged without the Councillor's prior approval except where such disclosure is required or sanctioned by the law.

3.4 Staff employed to provide personal services and in similar positions will often either directly, indirectly, deliberately or accidentally gain access to client information and not disclose it to another party without the express consent of their line managers who will decide the matter on a strict 'need to know' basis.

3.5 Any deliberate breach, neglect and/or persistent accidental breaches of client confidentiality, in whatever context, will be regarded as serious matters requiring consideration to be given to appropriate disciplinary action (see also Council Policy statement on HIV and AIDS).

3.6 Attention is also drawn to paragraph 9.3 dealing with the need for confidentiality in relation to competitive tendering.

4 Political neutrality

4.1 Employees serve the Council as a whole. It follows that they must serve all Councillors and not just those of the controlling group and must ensure that the rights of all Councillors are respected.

4.2 If employees are required to advise political groups, where this does not conflict with their conditions of service, they must do so in ways which do not compromise their political neutrality (see footnote).

4.3 Employees, whether or not in "politically restricted posts", must follow every lawfully expressed policy of the Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

4.4 If political assistants are appointed on fixed term contracts in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, then they will be exempt from the requirements of paragraph 4.1 to 4.3 above.

In respect of paragraph 4.2, whilst the Council currently has no such arrangement, it has always been accepted that Officers authorised by the Chief Executive could advise political groups provided that all parties could be so treated by request.

5 Relationships

5.1 Councillors

Employees are responsible to the Council through its senior managers. For some, their role is to give advice to Councillors and senior managers and all are there to carry out the Council's work. Mutual respect between employees and Councillors is essential to good local government. Accordingly in all their dealings with Councillors, employees are required to maintain the highest level of professional standards and personal integrity.

5.2 Local Community and Service Users

Employees should 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. In all their actions employees must ensure that no part of the local community is discriminated against. Attention is particularly drawn to the Council Strategy and Customer Care and Equal Opportunities policies.

5.3 Media Involvement

Unless it is part of an employee's normal duties or authority has been given by the Head of Communications, no employee shall communicate either directly or indirectly with any journalist representing the press or broadcast media on issues involving the Council, where it could be interpreted that the employee was speaking on behalf of the Council, or improperly divulging information gained in the course of Council employment. This includes producing written or oral material for publication or broadcast and appearing in person on television or radio. If authority is given, the Head of Communications will agree a brief with the employee which must be strictly adhered to.

5.4 Equality Issues

All employees should ensure that, in dealing with the provision of services and all other work related matters, all Council policies 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 a right to be treated with fairness and equity. Where service areas have their own equal opportunities policy statements these must be complied with.

6 Appointments and Other Employment Matters

- 6.1 Employees involved in appointments should ensure that these are made on the basis of merit in accordance with the Council's equal opportunities and recruitment and selection policies. Where applicable the priority requirements arising from the need to operate the Council's redeployment and redundancy policies will also have to be taken into account. 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 except when acting in accordance with the Council's redundancy and redeployment policies. Managers shall take into account the suitability of any potential redeployees and any training requirements to enable them to reach the necessary standard within a trial period.
- 6.2 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 personal relationship/friendship outside work with her or him.
- 6.3 No employee must seek to influence those involved in recruitment and selection procedures to give any form of preference to a relative, partner, friend etc. This applies equally to both permanent and temporary appointments. As any preference given as a result of the exercise of such influence will not accord with the requirements of paragraph 6.1, appropriate sanctions will also be considered in respect of the appointing manager/s. This requirement does not preclude the making of enquiries on behalf of another person as to the availability or otherwise of employment opportunities provided no attempt is made to canvass support for a possible applicant.
- 6.4 All candidates for any vacancy will continue to be required to state whether they are related to a Member of the Council or to a Senior Officer. Where any such relationship is declared the Council's procedures for safeguarding the recruitment and selection requirements of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy will be strictly enforced.
- 6.5 Employees must not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a relative, partner, friend etc.

7 Outside Commitments and Interests

7.1 Conflict of interests

7.1.1 Employees who have conditions of service which require them to obtain the express consent of the Council to engage in any other business or take up any other additional appointment must abide strictly by this condition. In all cases employees should be clear about their contractual obligations and should not take up any outside employment which conflicts with the Council's interests,

7.1.2 Although officers off-duty hours are their personal concern they must ensure that their Council duties are not subordinated to their private interests, and that no conflict arises between such duties and interests. Those employees who are not, under their conditions of service, required to obtain the Council's consent for them to take up additional employment must still ensure that any such additional employment does not, in the view of the Council, conflict with or react detrimentally to the Council's interests or in any way weaken public confidence in the conduct of the Council's business.

7.2 Off-Duty Conduct

Other than the matters referred to in paragraphs 7.1.1 and 7.1.2 what employees do in their private lives whilst off-duty is generally not the Council's concern. However, the Council will consider disciplinary action, including dismissal, in any situation where there has been criminal or non-criminal off-duty misconduct which affects an employee's suitability for continued employment in a particular job or if such off-duty conduct has unacceptable repercussions for the Council.

7.3 Personal interests and their Declaration

7.3.1 Employees must declare to their Departmental Heads any financial and/or non-financial interests which conflict or could bring about conflict with the Council's interests.

7.3.2 Many employees who are residents, or otherwise have interests within the Borough, are likely to be involved with organisations, clubs, schools and other bodies which have direct or indirect dealings with the Council. In most cases there is unlikely to be any conflict between the involvement of an individual, for example, as an ordinary member, parent, friend or supporter of such a body, and the work carried out as a Council employee.

7.3.3 To avoid the possibility of an allegation of improper motives being substantiated employees must, wherever their own work area involves dealings or taking decisions which will affect their outside interests including those referred to in paragraph 7.3.2, disclose such involvement. On no account must employees be involved in any Council matter directly affecting the finances or property of an

organisation in which they have an interest without an appropriate declaration being formally recorded and such involvement approved.

8 Secret Societies

8.1 Secret Societies

Employees must declare to their Departmental Head membership or involvement in any organisation characterised by the following:

- openness generally denied to anyone without formal membership;
- membership includes commitment of allegiance by the taking of an oath or similar procedure; and
- secrecy exists about rules, membership or conduct,

In respect of paragraph 8.1 declarations are not required where any of the practices indicated are associated with a generally recognised religion.

Departmental Heads will keep a register of all declarations made in accordance with this Section and the Corporate Head of Human Resources will keep a similar register of such declarations made by Departmental Heads.

9 Purchase of Goods and Services

9.1 Relationship with Contractors including Community Care Service Providers

9.1.1 All relationships of a business or private nature with actual or potential external contractors or service providers should be made known to the appropriate Departmental Head. Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit and in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Purchasing Code of Practice. No special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, former colleagues, friends, partners or relatives in the tendering process.

9.1.2 Employees who engage or supervise contractors or service providers or have any other official relationship with such contractors and/or agencies, who have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with them, should declare that relationship to the appropriate Departmental Head. Departmental Heads must report any such relationships to the Corporate Head of Human Resources.

9.1.3 Officers who engage and/or supervise contractors or service providers to the Council who in their private/domestic capacity wish to engage any such contractor/ provider should notify their Departmental Heads in order that these personal transactions can be registered. Departmental Heads should notify the Corporate Head of Human Resources.

9.2 Separation of Client and Contractor Roles

9.2.1 Employees involved in the tendering process and dealing with contractors should be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles within the authority. Senior employees who have both a client and contractor responsibility must take account of the need for accountability and openness.

9.2.2 Employees carrying out contractor or client roles must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and subcontractors.

9.2.3 Employees who are privy to confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors should not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

9.2.4 Employees contemplating a management buy-out should, as soon as they have formed a definite intent, inform the appropriate Departmental Head and withdraw from the contract awarding processes.

9.2.5 Employees should ensure that no special favour is shown to current or recent former colleagues or their partners, relatives, or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior or significant capacity.

9.3 Protecting the Council's Competitive Position during Tendering and Purchasing of Services

9.3.1 In relation to all Competitive Tendering (including Compulsory Competitive Tendering) and all situations where the Council's direct services and in-house arrangements are in competition with external/commercial service providers, employees must ensure that they do not release information which would weaken the Council's competitive position. This requirement must also, for example, be strictly observed by Social Services Managers where, in respect of Community Care services, external providers are under consideration.

9.3.2 Employees who have in the course of their employment been given access to and been entrusted with information in respect of the business and financing of any part of the organisation, its dealings, transactions and affairs and its relation to any associated organisations, must regard all such information as being commercially sensitive and confidential. Accordingly, it must not be disclosed to any other party without the consent of the appropriate Departmental Head. Requests for such information by the media must be dealt with as set out in paragraph 5.3.

9.3.3 Except in the proper course of their duties, Council employees must not divulge to any person or otherwise make use of any trade

secret, intellectual and copyright property or confidential information which is of value to the employer and concerns the business and finances of the Council. This general requirement also applies to information about organisations associated with the Council, its suppliers, agents, distributors or customers. These requirements apply equally to both current and former employees and both must endeavour to prevent publication or disclosure of such information.

9.3.4 If required to do so during the course of employment, or at the termination thereof, employees must surrender to a person authorised for this purpose all papers relating to the matters detailed in paragraphs 9.3.1 to 9.3.3.

Unless otherwise stated, any notifications received or declaration made in accordance with this Section must be kept on the appropriate personal file maintained by the relevant Departmental Personnel Section.

10 Corruption and Use of Funds

- 10.1 Employees must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence for them to 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. All allegations or suspected instances of such corruption will be investigated with a view to action being considered in accordance with the requirements of the Council's disciplinary procedure.
- 10.2 Acceptance of gifts, loans, fees, rewards or other advantages other than as provided for in Section 1.1 is contrary to the Council's policy.
- 10.3 The requirements of the Council's Standing Orders Relating to Contracts concerning Conduct of Staff and Provision against Corruption and the Council's Purchasing Code of Practice must be followed strictly.
- 10.4 Employees must ensure that they use any funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner. They should strive to ensure value for money to the local community and to avoid legal challenge to the Council.
- 10.5 Employees must comply strictly with the Council's current Financial Regulations in the carrying out of all relevant duties including any additional internal controls imposed by the Council's Audit Consultancy Unit.

11 Hospitality, Gifts and Client's Property

- 11.1 There will be some occasions when it is appropriate to accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the Council in the community. Invitations to attend purely social or sporting functions should be accepted only when these are part of the

life of the community and where the Council should be seen to be represented. They should be properly authorised and attendance recorded.

- 11.2 Employees should not accept more than the minimum reasonable hospitality from anyone with whom they have a professional relationship on behalf of the Council. As a general guide it is only appropriate for staff to accept such hospitality where it is commensurate with the style and presentation and value with that which it would be appropriate to provide on a reciprocal basis when acting as host on behalf of the Council.
- 11.3 When the hospitality offered is not in accordance with paragraphs 1.1.1 and 1.1.2, it should be refused with a courteous but firm indication given of the procedures and standards operating within the Council.
- 11.4 Employees must not accept gifts from anyone with whom they have a professional relationship on behalf of the Council, other than token items of nominal value such as a calendar or a diary. If employees are offered or receive such a token gift they must notify their Departmental Head. Departmental Heads should notify the Corporate Head of Human Resources(also see the Council's Purchasing Code of Practice).
- 11.5 During any period in which the Council is dealing with issues and/or making decisions which would have a direct bearing on any person or organisation offering hospitality, no such offer must be accepted without the authority of the appropriate Departmental Head.
- 11.6 Acceptance by employees of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable provided that the following three conditions are met,
 - where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal,
 - where the Council gives consent in advance; and
 - where the Council is satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised.
- 11.7 Where visits to inspect equipment, etc. are required, employees should ensure that the Council meets the cost of such visits to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions (also see the Council's Purchasing Code of Practice).
- 11.8 Staff who are employed to provide personal services, e.g.. Social Services Care Staff, may encounter difficulties in refusing gifts particularly where there is a sentimental attachment and where a personal service has been carried out over a period of time. In the event of any such gifts, details of any items received must be recorded and acceptance is conditional on approval by the appropriate Departmental Head.

- 11.9 All employees, specifically Social Services Care Staff, must abide strictly by the separate Code of Practice dealing with all transactions involving client's or carer's money and property. The term "clients" under that Code includes all current or previous clients or users of Council Social Services or their carers.
- 11.10 Traditionally drivers and collectors employed in Environmental Services have been permitted to receive seasonal gratuities (i.e. Christmas tips) which have been freely given by both domestic and trade recipients of such services. This exemption to the Council's general restriction on the receipt of gifts by employees (other than token items of nominal value as set out in paragraph 1 1.4) remains under this Code subject to compliance with the following three conditions.
- such gratuities not being sought in any way including by suggestion, request, demand or intimidation.
 - no connection being made or inferred by either the giver or receiver of the gratuity with the quality or level of services provided., and
 - only the gratuity being accepted and any payment and/or enquiry in relation to trade and/or special collections being referred to the Environmental Services Management.

Where it is indicated in this Section that a record must be kept this should be in the form of a register maintained by each Departmental Personnel Section. Such registers should be made available for public inspection on request at reasonable notice-

12 Requests made under a Client's Will

- 12.1 In the event that it comes to the attention of any employee that the employee and/or the employee's relatives, including spouse, partner or friend, may be a beneficiary under the terms of a client's will, the employee must notify the appropriate Departmental Head in writing. On receipt of such notification the appropriate Departmental Head will seek to establish whether there has been any misuse of the employee's position in order to exercise influence over the client to gain from the client a personal benefit and/or advantage for the employee and/or for any relative, including spouse, partner or friend of the employee.
- 12.2 Any abuse of the employee's position as described in paragraph 12.1 will be regarded as a breach of trust which the Council will pursue as a disciplinary matter. However, if the Departmental Head is satisfied that nothing in the employee's conduct could be regarded as such a breach of trust then no action may be appropriate if the client remains Intent on the employee being a beneficiary under the client's will.
- 12.3 In the circumstances where the first indication of a bequest to an employee and/or relative(s) of the employee, including spouse, partner or friend, only comes to light after the death of the client such

information must be made known to the Departmental Head in writing without delay enclosing, where possible, a copy of a relevant communication from the executor(s). Such openness will assist the Council to respond to any suggestion which may arise about undue personal influence etc.

13 Sponsorship - Giving and Receiving

- 13.1 Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a Council activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply (Section 1.1 refers). Contractors or potential contractors sponsoring such activities must be informed that their involvement will not have any bearing on future decisions in respect of the Council's normal tendering process which will be strictly adhered to (also see the Council's Purchasing Code of Practice).
- 13.2 When the Council wishes to sponsor an event or service neither an employee nor any partner, spouse, relative, friend or former colleague must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way without an approach having been made openly to the appropriate Departmental Head and, when consent is granted, the matter being recorded. Similarly, where the Council through sponsorship, grant aid, finance or other means, gives support in the community, employees should ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

All consents granted in connection with this Section must be recorded in a register maintained by each Departmental Personnel Section. Such registers must be made available for public inspection on request at reasonable notice.

LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES

HOW TO EXPRESS CONCERNS ABOUT CONDUCT AT WORK

1. Policy Statement

1.1 The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is committed to achieving the highest possible standards of service, including honesty, openness and accountability, and recognises that you have an important role to play in achieving this goal.

1.2 Employees will usually be the first to know when someone inside or connected with the Council is doing something illegal or improper. All misconduct by Council employees is taken very seriously and the Council encourages staff to use internal mechanisms to report such misconduct.

2. About the Procedure

2.1 Richmond upon Thames has a range of policies and procedures which deal with standards of behaviour at work; they cover Discipline, Grievance, Harassment and Recruitment and Selection. Employees are encouraged to use the provisions of these procedures when appropriate. There may be times, however, when the matter needs to be handled in a different way. Examples may be:

- Malpractice or ill treatment of a client or customer by a member of staff.
- A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed.
- Suspected fraud.
- Disregard for legislation, particularly in relation to health and safety at work.
- The environment has been, or is likely to be damaged.
- Breach of standing financial instructions.
- Showing undue favour over a contractual matter or to a job applicant.
- A breach of a code of conduct.
- Information on any of the above has been, is being or is likely to be concealed.

3. The Procedure and You

3.1 The above list is not exhaustive and if you are unsure about whether the action falls into one of these categories the Council would prefer you to report your concerns. As long as you make a report in good faith, even if it is not confirmed by an investigation, you will not be liable to disciplinary action. However, disciplinary action will be taken against you if you knowingly make false and/or malicious allegations.

3.2 You should note that making a report under this procedure will not halt any other procedures in progress against you, for example disciplinary or redundancy.

3.3 The Council will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of a person who raises a concern and will treat this as a serious disciplinary offence, to be dealt with under disciplinary procedures, which may lead to dismissal. Such harassment may include trying to stop another employee from raising a concern or being responsible for an act of recrimination against an employee who raises a concern.

3.4 The Council's first policy was agreed in 1997 and since then an Act of Parliament has been passed - the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 - which will protect you from any reprisals as long as you meet the rules set out in the Act. Our policy has been amended to reflect the new Act, which covers agency as well as employed staff. The Act has rules for making a 'protected disclosure', which will only be protected if all of the following conditions are met:

- You must disclose the information in good faith.
- You must believe it to be substantially true.
- You must **not** act maliciously or make false allegations.
- You must **not** seek any personal gain.
- You must disclose the information to the appropriate person.

4. What you should do

4.1 These notes explain what you need to know and the steps you should take if you have any concerns. The procedure is in addition to paragraphs 2.1-2.3 of the Code of Conduct for Council Employees agreed on 18th July 1995.

Do

- Make an immediate note of your concerns.
Note all relevant details, such as what was said, the date, time and names of the people involved.
- Let someone know about your suspicions
See who to contact below.
- Deal with the matter quickly.
Any delay may allow the problem to continue.

Don't

- Do nothing.
- Be afraid of raising your concerns.
- Approach or accuse individuals directly.
- Try to investigate the matter your self.
- Talk to people other than those you have been asked to contact.

4.2 In the first instance, and in accordance with the Act, you should always raise your concerns internally; you can do this by:

1. Contacting your line manager or your Head of Department; or
2. Contacting the Council's Monitoring Officer, who is Richard Mellor, the Head of Legal Services on extension 7130. (Legal Services staff can contact June Hall, the Corporate Head of Human Resources on extension 7108.); or
3. Contacting the Council's Special Investigations Unit (part of the Finance Department) if your concerns involve potential fraud or criminal activities. Contact Diana Neaves or Alix Wilson, Acting Heads of Internal Audit and Risk Management on 7248 and 7291 respectively. You may also ring the Council's Fraud Line on 0800 389 9795.

1.0 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation or are unable to raise concerns internally you may make a disclosure to a prescribed regulator. These include the Health and Safety Executive, the Audit Commission (which has a special telephone line on 020 7630 1019), the Environment Agency, the Serious Fraud Office, Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Charity Commission and the Data Protection Registrar.

4.4 The Council stresses that you should raise concerns internally first, but the Act also provides for you to make a wider disclosure (which could include to the police or an MP), if and only if:

- the matter is exceptionally serious; and
- you reasonably feared that you would be victimised; and
- you reasonably believed that there would be a cover up and there is no prescribed person (Audit Commission etc.); or
- the matter was raised internally or with a prescribed person, but was not dealt with properly.

In assessing whether an employee acted reasonably, a tribunal will take into account all the circumstances including to whom the disclosure was made (for example disclosure to an MP may be reasonable, but not necessarily the media).

4.5 You may also wish to contact Public Concern at Work, a charity working in this area who can provide free and confidential advice. Telephone 020 7404 6609.

5. Role of Trade Unions

5.1 The Council recognises that employees may wish to seek advice and to be represented by their trade union officers when using the

provisions of this policy and acknowledges and endorses the role trade union officers play in this area.

6. The Investigation

- 6.1 All your concerns will be investigated. The investigation may need to be carried out under terms of strict confidentiality i.e. by not informing the subject of the complaint until (or if) it becomes necessary to do so. You will be kept informed about the progress and outcome of the investigation. However, you will not be provided with details of any disciplinary action, which will remain confidential to the individual concerned.
- 6.2 Within 10 working days of a concern being received, the Council will write to you:
- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
 - indicating how it proposes to deal with the matter;
 - giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
 - telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
 - supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms; and
 - telling you whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.
- 6.3 If you are not happy with the outcome of the investigation you may wish to raise the matter with an external organisation such as a prescribed regulator.
- 6.4 The Council will do everything possible to keep your identity secret, if you wish. However, there may be circumstances (for example, if your report becomes the subject of a criminal investigation) where you may be needed as a witness. Your identity may also need to be shared with other senior officers and/or Members during the investigation, but you will be told if this is the case.

7. In conclusion

- 7.1 While the Council cannot guarantee to respond to your report in the way in which you might wish, we will handle the matter fairly and properly. By using this procedure you will help us to achieve this.