Code of Conduct for employees of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

As an employee of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, it is **your** responsibility to ensure that you fully understand and abide by this Code of Conduct. The good reputation of the Authority depends on all employees being seen to act appropriately. If you are in any doubt about the right course of action in any instance you should always seek the advice of your line manager.

General principles of conduct

Your role as an employee is to serve the Authority by delivering / supporting services in line with the Authority's stated objectives, whilst implementing and observing Authority policies. The Authority is a public body, and the public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from you when you are performing these roles.

The Committee on Standards in Public Life has laid down seven principles, and these underpin this Code of Conduct. The principles are:

- Selflessness – Employees should act solely in terms of the public interest;
- Integrity – Employees must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. Employees should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. Employees must declare and resolve any personal interests and relationships;
- Objectivity – Employees must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias;
- Accountability – Employees are accountable to the Authority, which in turn is accountable to the public for its decisions and actions. Employees must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this, and recognise the duty of all public sector employees to discharge public functions reasonably and according to the law;
- Openness – Employees should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so;
- Honesty – Employees should be truthful;
- Leadership – Employees should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. Employees should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Personal Interests

The principle of integrity stated above makes clear that employees must not allow their private interests or beliefs to interfere with their professional duty. Therefore you must not misuse your official position, or information acquired in the course of your employment, to further your private interest or the private interests of others. On any occasion where

private interests or beliefs could interfere (or could reasonably be seen by others as interfering) with your professional duty, you should discuss the matter with your line manager.

All employees must comply with the requirements of Section 117 of the Local Government Act 1972, which says that if you become aware that the Authority has entered into, or proposes to enter into, any contract in which you have any financial interest, whether direct or indirect, then you must give written notice to the Authority as soon as possible. This can be complied with by completing a Staff Declaration of Interests Form and forwarding this to the Monitoring Officer for inclusion in the Register of Staff Interests (access to which is limited to people with a legitimate need to know). An indirect financial interest covers situations where you (or your spouse / partner) is a member of a company which is contracting or proposing to contract with the Authority, or is a business partner or an employee of a person or company which has or proposes to have a contract with the Authority.

Unless you have the Authority's explicit approval, you should never purchase goods from or use the service of a contractor on preferential terms for private purposes if these terms are given either directly or indirectly because of the contractual or other official business relationship (potential or actual) between the contractor and the Authority.

Section 117 also says that employees must not accept any fee or reward whatsoever, other than their proper remuneration. You should therefore abide by the rules of the Authority about the declaration of gifts offered to or received by you from any person or body seeking to do business with the Authority, or which would benefit from a relationship with the Authority. The Authority has issued **Guidance to Staff on Personal Interests**, including offers of gifts and hospitality, and carrying out work outside of their contract of employment. You must comply with this guidance, which aims to protect the reputation of the Authority, as well as that of individual employees.

Required Conduct

(i) Neutrality

You must not allow your own personal or political opinions to interfere with your work. In addition, under Section 3 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, certain posts are senior or influential enough to warrant additional controls placed on the activities of post holders. Such posts are classed as 'politically restricted', and post holders must comply with any legal restrictions on their political activities. The designation of such posts is confirmed to employees at the start of their employment.

(ii) Respect

Mutual respect between employees and Members is essential to good local government and working relationships should be kept on a professional basis. You should deal with the public, Members and other employees sympathetically, efficiently and without bias.

For the avoidance of doubt, social interaction between employees and Members is not prohibited by the above requirement, and any personal relationship (e.g. family and friendship) should be conducted in such a way as to completely separate that relationship from your work for the Authority.

It is also essential that you treat other employees, as well as volunteers, contractors and the public, with courtesy and respect, and in accordance with the Authority's Equality and

Diversity Policy.

(iii) Stewardship
You must ensure that you use public funds entrusted to you in a responsible and lawful manner and you must not utilise property, vehicles or other facilities of the Authority for personal use unless authorized to do so.

(iv) Using your position improperly
You must not use, or attempt to use, your position improperly either for your or anybody else's advantage or disadvantage, for example by unauthorised disclosure of confidential information, or assisting someone to obtain a contract with the Authority.

(v) Whistle-blowing
If you become aware of activities which you believe to be illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent with this code of conduct, you should report the matter, acting in accordance with the Authority's **Confidential Reporting Policy**.

(vi) Treatment of Information
Openness in the dissemination of information and decision making should be the norm in the Authority. However, certain information may be confidential or sensitive and is therefore not appropriate for a wider audience; this includes private items taken to committee meetings (those printed on pink paper). Where confidentiality is necessary to protect the privacy or other rights of individuals or bodies, information should not be released to anyone other than a person who is entitled to receive it, or needs to have access to it for the proper discharge of their functions.

Nothing in this Code can be taken as overriding legal obligations to keep certain information confidential, or to divulge certain information. You must at all times comply with the Authority's Data Protection policy and its Freedom of Information Guidance for officers.

(vii) Appointment of staff
Employees of the Authority, when involved in the recruitment and appointment of staff, must ensure that appointments are made on the basis of merit. In order to avoid any accusation of bias, you must not be involved in any appointment, or any other decision relating to discipline, promotion or pay and conditions for any other employee, or prospective employee, to whom you are related or with whom you have a close personal relationship outside work. An employee and an applicant are deemed to be related if:

- they are partners,
- or if either of them (or their partner), is the brother or sister, son or daughter, grandson, or grand-daughter, or nephew, or niece of the other

When involved in making appointments, you should base your decision solely on the consideration as to which candidate would best serve the Authority in the post in question and should never let personal preferences influence your judgement.

(viii) Investigations
You have a duty to assist with any investigations that the Authority may carry out from time to time, either in accordance with legal provisions (e.g. Monitoring Officer investigations) or in its role as an employer.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct

If you do not observe the standards set out in this code, and the more specific guidance referred to within it, you may be liable to disciplinary action under the Authority's procedures. Serious breaches of the Code could lead to your dismissal. In addition, failure to disclose a personal interest may be a criminal offence.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS
Confidential Reporting Policy
Guidance to Staff on Personal Interests

Reviewed and approved by SMT, 28 November 2019
Due for review in 2024.