Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 9**

Finance & Resources Committee

01 October 2024

Staff Code of Conduct

Purpose of the Report

1. To present an updated Staff Code of Conduct to Members for adoption.

Recommendation

2. That the revised Staff Code of Conduct, attached as an **Appendix**, is approved and adopted.

Strategic Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and support the strategic planning framework:

    - Corporate Plan Objective 32
      Operate governance arrangements that are fit for purpose, as reported through the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Governance"

Background

4. The Staff Code of Conduct ('Code') has been reviewed in line with the Authority's policy review timetable.

5. The Code was last reviewed by SMT in November 2019. A copy of the current Code can be found here. A full review has been carried out by the Director of Corporate Services and the Head of HR. The Code has essentially been re-written to modernise the terminology and to make it more staff friendly. The inclusion of paragraph 4.4 q) also replaces the Authority's outdated Dress Code Guidelines from March 2010.

6. The Member Champion for Corporate Management has been consulted and their suggested amendments incorporated into the draft Code. The draft Code has also been shared with UNISON who have made no comments. SMT have also reviewed and commented on the Code.

Financial Implications

7. None

Legal Implications

8. None

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

9. None. An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted and does not highlight any issues.

Conclusion

10. Following adoption, the new Code will be shared with staff and added to the intranet.

Clare Burrows
Director of Corporate Services

Vikki Thomas
Head of Human Resources

Appendix

Staff Code of Conduct

1. Introduction

1.1 The Authority has adopted the following Code dealing with the conduct and behavioural standards that are expected of, and must be upheld by, all staff.

1.2 The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all Authority staff, who must conduct themselves and Authority business in compliance with the highest professional standards and in accordance with legislative requirements.

1.3 It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure they fully understand and abide by this Code of Conduct.

2. Principles

2.1 The following principles are embodied within the requirements of this Code – The Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles) and staff must at all times practice and exhibit the principles through the course of their work:

- **Selflessness** – Staff should act solely in terms of the public interest;
- **Integrity** – Staff must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. Staff should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. Staff must declare and resolve any personal interests and relationships;
- **Objectivity** – Staff must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias;
- **Accountability** – Staff are accountable to the Authority, which in turn is accountable to the public for its decisions and actions. Staff 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** – Staff 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** – Staff should be truthful;
- **Leadership** – Staff should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. Staff should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour and conduct wherever it occurs.

3. Core values and behaviours

3.1 The principles above are reflected in the Authority's core value and behaviours which set out the way in which we will achieve our vision. They describe the culture of the Authority and the way in which we work:

- **Improvement:** We will continually strive to improve our performance in delivering National Park purposes.
- **Accountability:** We will explain and take responsibility for our decisions and actions.
- **Commitment:** We will do what we say we will do.
- **Integrity:** All our relationships will be built on honesty, respect, transparency, equality and impartiality.
- **Open and approachable**: We will be open to new ways of doing things, and will work positively with others to achieve our objectives in ways that help them meet theirs.
- **Valuing and empowering our People:** We will value the people who work for us and will work to ensure that they are equipped, supported and empowered to provide professional services to the public.

4. Application of the Code

4.1 This Code applies to all staff of the Authority. Non-compliance with the Code may result in action being taken under the Authority's Disciplinary Procedure and could result in dismissal from employment with the Authority.

4.2 If staff are in any doubt about any provision of this Code, or what is expected or required of them, they must raise any issues they have with their manager.

4.3 Staff are expected to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to and compatible with their employment with the Authority and are required to:

a) Fulfil the obligations placed upon them under the terms of their contract of employment, for example:

i. Be ready and willing to take a flexible approach to work, as specified in the job description, to meet the needs of the Authority;
ii. Undertake their duties and responsibilities co-operatively, effectively, efficiently and diligently;
iii. Be punctual in timekeeping;
iv. Be honest and trustworthy;
v. Carry out reasonable management instructions;
vi. Take care of themselves, their colleagues and others whilst at work; and
vii. Take care of Authority property.

b) Adhere to all Authority policies and procedures, including the Health, Safety and Wellbeing rules that apply to their particular area of work/location.

c) Show respect for all people that they come into contact with in the course of their duties (e.g. the public, fellow colleagues, staff from other organisations, Members etc.) and demonstrate their commitment to ensuring equality and respect for all.

d) Demonstrate impartiality in respect of any decisions they take or advice they provide on behalf of the Authority.

e) Maintain the confidentiality of any confidential information obtained in the course of their employment. Staff must not:

i. Disclose information given to them in confidence by anyone, or information acquired that they believe is of a confidential nature;

ii. 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; or

iii. Give information to the media unless they are authorised to do so.

f) Take care with the Authority's resources. Staff must ensure they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner and must not utilise property, vehicles or other facilities for personal use unless authorised to do so.

g) Follow the Authority's policies/procedures governing:

i. Trade Union duties and activities (as appropriate for members of Trade Unions) and as set out in the Authority's Trade Union Recognition Agreement.

ii. Personal responsibility as a member of staff for reporting absence/changed circumstances (including those) which could affect their ability to fulfil the role in which they are employed, claiming payments/expenses/allowances etc.

iii. Financial regulations including the procedures for the procurement of goods and services.

iv. Use of facilities - at work, staff may have access to facilities, such as office equipment, computers, telephones, transport, etc. These facilities are not intended for private use. Where some personal use is permitted they must observe any corporate protocols, including the ICT Users Policy.

v. Intellectual property (e.g. designs, programmes, drawing and inventions) - the ownership and copyright of work produced for the Authority will normally belong to the Authority. Further guidance on this issue can be obtained from the Director of Corporate Services.

vi. Disclosure of interests and outside employment – Section 117(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 requires staff to give the Authority written notice if they become aware that they directly or indirectly have a financial interest in any contract (other than their own contract of employment) which the Authority has entered, or proposes to enter, into. Failure to comply with this requirement may be a criminal offence. Staff must also not undertake any additional outside employment which is in conflict with the Authority's interests/business. Staff paid above spinal column point (SCP) 28 on the Authority's pay scale, or equivalent, must seek written permission prior to undertaking any additional outside employment, as detailed in the Guide on Officer Declaration of Interests Gifts and Outside Work.

vii. Any payment or gift for undertaking their work at the Authority, other than their proper remuneration from the Authority, in line with the Authority's Guide on Officer Declaration of Interests, Gifts and Outside Work (to ensure compliance

with the requirements of Section 117(2) of the Local Government Act 1972).

viii. Data, information and other details must be held in accordance with the Authority's Data Protection Policy and its Freedom of Information Guidance for officers.

ix. Any managerial responsibilities they may have, including those relating to operational, financial and HR matters, and statutory obligations.

h) Use the appropriate lines of communication to express views/issues relating to their employment or the Authority's services (i.e. via their manager).

i) Follow the Authority's arrangements in relation to contact with the media. Staff must ensure that all press enquiries concerning the business of the Authority are channelled through the Communications Team, who offer support and advice on all matters relating to the media.

j) Notify their manager of any known or suspected breaches of the law or Authority's policies, procedures and regulations, and co-operate with any investigation of such breaches. If they feel unable to approach their immediate manager on a specific matter, they should notify a more senior manager responsible for the area of the service in which they work or the Director of Corporate Services. The Authority has a Confidential Reporting Policy.

k) Disclose to the Authority as required on appointment, or at any time, any criminal charges/convictions and cautions in accordance with the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Failure to disclose where required will be considered under the Authority's Disciplinary Procedure and may result in dismissal.

l) Not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work. Treat all Members equally, ensuring that the individual rights of all Members are respected. Close personal familiarity between staff and Members should be avoided. The Protocol on relations between Members and officers promotes and encourages positive and effective cooperation to maximize the Authority's effectiveness in delivering its statutory purposes and its services.

m) Undertake learning and development, as required by their job role or employment with the Authority.

n) Notify their manager of any personal interests or relationships, in or outside of work, which may result in their honesty/objectivity/integrity being challenged in their role with the Authority, in line with the Authority's Guide on Officer Declaration of Interests, Gifts and Outside Work.

o) Disclose any known relationship between themselves and a candidate who has applied for an Authority vacancy where they are involved in appointing to the post.

p) wear any uniform or clothes/overalls specifically provided for their role with the Authority whilst carrying out their duties. All other staff are required to dress in a way that is appropriate to the work they have to do, as determined by their manager or recognised conventions (e.g. smart clothes for public meetings, etc.).

q) Take care to ensure that their personal hygiene and also their personal appearance is appropriate having regard to the conventions of the workplace and internal/external working environment.

5. Political Restrictions

5.1 Certain staff hold politically restricted roles that are defined in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 as:

a) Specified roles, such as the Head of the Paid Service, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer. These role holders are restricted without exemption or appeal; or

b) Roles that meet the duties-related criteria for determining a 'sensitive' post, unless the role holder appeals successfully against such a determination. These posts are defined as those that (i) give advice on a regular basis to the Authority, or any Committee or Sub-Committee of the Authority or (ii) speak on behalf of the Authority on a regular basis to journalists and broadcasters.

5.2 Staff that hold a politically restricted role will be notified of this on appointment and it will be stated within their job description.

5.3 If you are in a politically restricted role, then you are disqualified from being a Councillor in any local authority (other than Parish or Community Councils), from being an MP or an MEP or from holding office in a political party. You must not canvas at any election or poll and/or speak or write in a way which appears to influence public support for a political party.

BLANK PAGE