



Subject:	A revised Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Christine Sheridan, Head of HR
Contact Officer:	Catherine Christy, HR Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	This report sets out a proposed response to a consultation exercise being carried out by the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) on a revised Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree the attached draft response to the Local Government Staff Commission's consultation exercise on a revised Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees.

3.0	Main report
	<p data-bbox="272 226 587 255"><u>Background Information</u></p> <p data-bbox="165 327 1437 607">3.1 The LGSC has requested feedback on amendments to a revised Code of Conduct which has been developed by a working group, comprising representatives from Councils, NIHE, the Department for Communities and the Trade Unions. The draft revised code is attached at Appendix 2. The amendments have been made to take account of best practice following a review of examples of similar Codes of Conduct in other public sector bodies and to address issues which Councils had reported in operating the current Code.</p> <p data-bbox="165 678 1437 860">3.2 The consultation closes on 30 September 2020 and the working group will meet to consider the responses received. The final amended Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees will then be approved by the Commission before being issued as a statutory recommendation to Councils for implementation.</p> <p data-bbox="272 931 419 960"><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p data-bbox="165 987 1437 1061">3.3 Corporate HR, Legal Services, AGRS, Marketing and Corporate Communications and Digital Services have input into the proposed response attached at Appendix 1.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1133 1437 1211">3.4 As well as suggestions for subject matter to be included, clarification on terminology and language used, the draft response also highlights the following:</p> <ul data-bbox="323 1283 1385 1877" style="list-style-type: none"> • the need for the Code to explicitly state that Councils need to ensure that supporting guidance and policies for managing conflicts of interest and gifts and hospitality are up to date, clearly communicated and well understood and that they are vitally important in underpinning the Code. • that Belfast City Council agrees that the final amended Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees be approved by the Commission before being issued as a statutory recommendation to Councils for implementation. However, it should remain the case that individual councils are free to decide upon specific arrangements for the implementation of the code within their respective organisations. • that it would be helpful to have clarity on the future status of the model Code as a “statutory recommendation, when the Commission is dissolved.

3.5	The working group has also sought feedback on whether the Code of Conduct should contain guidance on council employees participating in political activity depending on their role in the council.
3.6	The code accepts at the outset that staff are entitled to hold political opinions. However, it would be extremely difficult to define a set of circumstances/ or roles within which an employee could or could not participate in political activity. If specific employees were prohibited from engaging in any political activity or opinion then this could be subject to challenge. It is our view that paragraph 4.3 in the Code is wide enough to allow for some discretion and consideration on a case by case basis.
3.7	In our response we also suggest that that the Code should require that employees must declare this planned activity and seek permission before proceeding.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.8	While there are no resource implications to this report, a revised Code of Conduct will require a robust communication exercise.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.9	Section 4.8 in the draft Code sets out the duties of both the Council and employees with regards to Equality and Good Relations.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Draft consultation response to the revised Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees – subject to full Council approval. Appendix 2 - Draft revised Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees