



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

NATIONAL CORE CODE OF ETHICS

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 24 September 2021

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on progress to implement the national Core Code of Ethics.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- Endorse the implementation of the national Core Code of Ethics; and
- Note the review of the Employee Code of Conduct to align with the NFCC Core Code of Ethics

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : Craig Parkin
Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Tel : 0115 967 0880

Email : craig.parkin@notts-fire.gov.uk

Media Enquiries Contact : Corporate Communications Team
(0115) 967 0880 corporatecomms@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A Core Code of Ethics, developed by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Local Government Association (LGA), and more recently in partnership with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, was published on 18 May 2021.
- 1.2 This work arises from the recommendations of the State of Fire Review 2019/20, which reported that:
- “FRSs would benefit from a national code of ethics which specifies and establishes the exemplary standards of behaviour for all staff. This code should be at the heart of everything services do and make it clear to staff what behaviour is acceptable in their everyday work. This will allow poor behaviour to be challenged regardless of people’s positions and roles. It will also give new recruits clear expectations of, and confidence in, what behaviour is acceptable.
- To make sure they become part of everyday working life, services should include these values as part of staff performance appraisals and consider them if people seek promotion.”
- 1.3 Work was undertaken initially through the NFCC and LGA, and more recently in partnership with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, to draft a code underpinned by a National Fire Standard. Guidance has also been published to support the implementation process.
- 1.4 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) was part of the national group that developed the Code, and the Service responded to the consultation exercise that preceded publication.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The Core Code of Ethics is based on five key principles. They are:
- Putting our communities first;
 - Integrity;
 - Dignity and respect;
 - Leadership;
 - Equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 2.2 Whilst the Code is founded on the Nolan Principles in public service, this is not specifically mentioned in the code, but they do underpin it. This is to make it more accessible to all employees, not just to those in senior positions. The [Fire Standard](#) which underpins the code sets out the expectations on FRSs to implement the Code.
- 2.3 Fire Services must do the following to meet the Fire Standard for the Core Code of Ethics –

1. *Adopt and embed the Core Code to demonstrate that the service is fully committed and compliant at both an individual and corporate level.*
2. *Ensure the attitudes, professional behaviours and conduct described within the core code are reflected in its decision-making, policies, procedures, processes, and associated guidance that govern how the service manages and supports its workforce.*
3. *Provide training and support to all those who work for, or on behalf of, a service to achieve their understanding of the Core Code and an appreciation of their responsibilities in adhering to it.*
4. *Not detract from the Core Code.*

Those who lead services and those who work for, or on behalf of, the service must:

5. *Understand, respect, and follow the principles of the Core Code and demonstrate this by their commitment to it and their responsibility for upholding it.*
6. *Conduct themselves in accordance with the Core Code.*

A fire and rescue service should:

10. *Designate a senior leader who is responsible for promoting the Core Code throughout the service and ensuring that all those who work for, or on behalf of, the service understand its contents and what is expected of them.*

- 2.4 Whilst the Code is centred on service values and culture and has a behaviour focus, the Standard makes it explicit that it also applies to corporate governance and links to other codes, such as the CIPFA Code of Governance, and references legislation and regulations such as the Equality Act, Public Sector Equality Duty, Local Audit and Accountability Act and the Accounts and Audits Regulations.
- 2.5 The impact of the Standard is therefore more far-reaching than employee and senior leadership behaviours, and applies to governance arrangements, finance and procurement policy and practice and ethical decision-making. It has been made clear that implementation of the code will be a line of enquiry at the next HMICFRS inspection.
- 2.6 Whilst the Code does not directly apply to Members of the Combined Fire Authority, as they have their own code, it is advised that they are overtly engaged and supportive of its implementation. The Standard states the following for those governing Fire Services:

Those responsible for the governance of fire and rescue services, whilst complying with their own ethical codes must:

7. *hold the Chief Fire Officer to account for the implementation of the Core Code at a local level;*
8. *play a proactive role in challenging behaviour inconsistent with the Core Code; and*

9. *ensure strategies, policies and performance measures are in place to promote and embed a positive and inclusive culture.*

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- 2.7 The Service has developed an implementation plan which will ensure that the Code becomes embedded across the organisation. Themes within the plan include a communications plan, Contracts (employment and suppliers/third parties) review, policies/procedures, NFRS employee code of conduct, training and development and governance. The Service aims to have the Code implemented by the end of 2021.
- 2.8 Ongoing scrutiny will be afforded by regular updates being provided to the Authority through the Human Resources update report, the Annual Governance Statement and reports of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority where appropriate.

EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT

- 2.9 One of the elements of the implementation plan is the review of the NFRS Employee Code of Conduct (Appendix A). This has been updated to ensure that the Core Code of Ethics are explicitly covered and are followed by all new and existing employees.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications. However, financial governance is an integral part of establishing that the Service has good internal governance arrangements which are open to external scrutiny.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are a number of Human Resources and Learning and Development implications, including embedding The Code into contracts and relevant policies, and into induction processes.
- 4.2 The Service's values-based Behavioural Framework has been reviewed to ensure that the Code of Ethics is integrated. Training and e-learning has also been developed to reflect this change.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Core Code of Ethics was equality impact assessed by the group at a national level and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is a key principle within the Code.
- 5.2 An Initial Equality Impact has been undertaken on the revised NFRS Code of Conduct and shows no adverse impact.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The NFCC Code of Ethics will form part of the HMICFRS review going forward and the Service will need to demonstrate compliance. Progress against the implementation plan will provide assurance that the Service has adopted its key principles and adapted its practice to embed ethical behaviours and practice across the organisation.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

A Service representative was part of the original group working alongside colleagues representing NFCC, LGA and the Home Office.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Endorse the implementation of the national Core Code of Ethics; and
- 10.2 Note the review of the Employee Code of Conduct to align with the NFCC Core Code of Ethics.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



Employee Code of Conduct

POL 2213

Scope

This policy is mandatory and applies to NFRS staff.

Summary

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to clarify the expectations of the Fire Authority and to ensure that all employees understand the standards of conduct required of them.

This code reflects the Code of Ethics Fire Standard and NFCC Core Code of Ethics, which establish sector expectations about governance, behaviour and integrity.

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Assessments done		Initial EIA – July 2021	
Version	Date	Modified by	Changes
1.1	November 2020	Head of People and Organisational Development	Revisions of Code of Conduct to incorporate the NFCC Core Code of Ethics and bring policy references

			up to date
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Contents

1.	Key information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Introduction 2 The Five Fire and Rescue Ethical Principles 3 4
2.	Primary information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Section 1: Responsibilities and expectations of NFRS employees 2 Section 2: Contractual Obligations – Key Policies and Procedures 3 Section 3: Equalities and Inclusion 4 Section 4: Financial Standards 5 Section 5: Information Technology and Use of Data 6 Section 6: Relations with Members of the Authority
3.	Support information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 2 3 4
4.	Appendices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 How we will deliver the Five Fire and Rescue Service Ethical Principles 2 Member/Officer Protocol

Information Delivery System (IDS)

The IDS uses colour to identify sections within documents, namely:

Section	Colour	Purpose
Key		Is critical 'need to know' information and can consequently be found at the front of the document.
Primary		Is information that supports and elaborates on key information, but is not immediately critical in nature.
Support		Is background information that further underpins the previous sections.
Appendices		Is relevant information such as process maps, tick lists, flowcharts and templates etc.

Page 2 of

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Key information

Introduction

- 1.1 The Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service values its reputation as a trusted and respected public body. Maintaining this reputation depends upon the professionalism and integrity of every employee who works for the Service.
- 1.2 The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all Officers of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority and Officers must always act in accordance with that trust.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to clarify the expectations of the Fire Authority and to ensure that all employees understand the standards of conduct required of them.
- 1.4 This code reflects the Code of Ethics Fire Standard and NFCC Core Code of Ethics, which establish sector expectations about governance, behaviour and integrity. Ethics are a cornerstone of professionalism. Ethical behaviour is crucial to maintain public trust and confidence, and to continue to build a reputation which people value and are aware of. This Core Code will also support the fire and rescue service in improving the culture and the diversity within it, and will also ensure that an ethical approach is embedded into all areas of service. The intention being to:

- Ensure consistency in ethical behaviour
 - Enhance professionalism within the service
 - Generate a positive working culture
 - Improve the trust and reputation of the service.
- 1.5 The Service trusts its employees to act appropriately and do the right thing. However, from time to time, situations may arise whereby further guidance is needed.
- 1.6 The Code covers, through its different sections:
- our expectations of employee conduct
 - the importance of treating others fairly and with respect and the elimination of any form of discrimination
 - references the key policies and procedures that govern the way in which we do things
 - relationships between Officers and elected Members
 - the rules governing fraud, contracts and financial probity, and
 - the ways in which issues can be raised and addressed
- 1.7 A whole suite of detailed policies and procedures underpin this Code of Conduct, and these can be found in the MyNet Document Library. These are referenced within the document.
- 1.8 Clarification about the application of the Code or relevant policies, procedures and regulations should be addressed to line managers, the Human Resources Department, or the owners of the relevant documents. Trade union members may seek to raise issues through their Trade Union representatives.

Corporate Governance

- 1.9 FRSs operate in a rapidly changing environment where new ethical challenges arise on a regular basis. Therefore, we often have to make decisions in difficult, changing, and unclear situations. The principles within this Code should form the basis of ethical decision making, supplemented by the needs of the FRS, employees, the community, and service users.
- 1.10 Our behaviour is central to how we deliver services to our community. We will ensure the resources are in place to enable the delivery of services in line with its ethical values and vision. We will also strive to be an employer of choice through the creation of a positive, responsible, innovative, open, and challenging working environment in which ability and delivery is valued, encouraged, developed, recognised, and rewarded.
- 1.11 As an organisation, Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service ascribes to the principles of the Government Committee on Standards in Public Life (the

Nolan Committee), which set out the following guiding principles for those involved in providing public services:

- Integrity
- Selflessness
- Objectivity
- Openness
- Leadership
- Accountability
- Honesty

1.12 The Service approved a published Local Code of Corporate Governance in February 2017 ([link](#)) which was based upon the CIPFA/SOLACE framework for delivering good governance in Local Government, and which underpins the way that Members and Officers operate to ensure high standards of corporate governance. This is based on the following principles: openness, inclusivity, integrity and accountability. The Code is in the process of being updated.

Primary information

SECTION ONE: Responsibilities and Expectations of all NFRS Employees

- 2.1 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to uphold the highest standards of conduct and expects all employees, whatever their role, to act at all times in accordance with this expectation in order to maintain the trust and respect of council tax-payers and service users.
- 2.2 All employees are expected to maintain professional standards of conduct, both whilst at work and in their day-to-day dealings with the wider community, particularly when representing the Service. Employees should seek to ensure that their behaviour does not, or have the potential to, bring the Service into disrepute or adversely affect the dignity of service employees or service users, or damage the reputation of the Service or otherwise give rise to criticism of the Service.
- 2.3 Employees of the Service have a responsibility to act fairly, honestly, in good faith and in an impartial way in the delivery of services on behalf of the Fire Authority, and to demonstrate behaviour commensurate with the stated values of the Service.
- 2.4 This requirement also extends to conduct whilst in the workplace, and employees are required to adhere to the policies, procedures and guidance issued by the Service and which are incorporated into and supplement individual Contracts of Employment.
- 2.5 Specifically, attention is drawn to the Authority's Equalities Statement ([link](#)) which expresses the joint commitment of the Authority and Trade Unions to ensure that all people are treated fairly and are not subject to discrimination, harassment or bullying by colleagues, contractors or service users.

The Five Fire and Rescue Service Ethical Principles

- 2.6 These are the five national principles that have been adopted by the Service and underpin our expectations of all our employees:

Community at our Heart: We will put the interest of the public, the community, and service users first.

Integrity: We will act with integrity including being open, truthful, accurate and consistent in our actions, words, decisions, methods and outcomes.

Dignity and Respect: We will treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.

Leadership: We will be positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership. We will be accountable for our behaviour, decisions, and actions, and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI): We will continually recognise and promote the value of EDI. We will continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within the Service and the wider communities in which we serve. We will stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

Further information on how we will seek to achieve these principles are set out in more details at Appendix One.

SECTION 2: CONTRACUTAL OBLIGATIONS – POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- 3.1 Every employee is issued with a Contract of Employment at the start of their employment (a Main Statement of Terms and Conditions of Employment) which summarises the obligations of the Authority to them as employees, and also the expectations of the Authority in terms of their adherence to the policies and procedures set down to govern conduct in the workplace.
- 3.2 This Code of Conduct forms part your contract with Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service. Whilst this Code cannot set out every eventuality that may arise, it does provide clear direction about the standards that are expected from every employee. If you are in any doubt about an issue, particularly if an action on your part may transgress this code, then you should seek advice from your line manager, the HR Department or a trade union representative.
- 3.3 Whilst the contract document details key contractual issues (explicit terms), there are also unwritten but implicit terms that govern the employment relationship and expectations about conduct. These are expectations that can reasonably be expected of any employee in any workplace. The fact that these terms are not written down, does not mean that they are not equally relevant or important.
- 3.4 There are many policies and procedures that underpin your conduct whilst at work and, in some cases, your conduct outside of work where it reflects upon the integrity and reputation of the Authority. These are documents that are subject to consultation and negotiation with Trade Unions, either nationally or locally. These also form part of your employment contract. All such policies and procedures can be found in the MyNet Document Library.

Please note: the following are set in alphabetical order for ease of reference and not in order of priority:

3.5 Core values

The following values have been adopted by the Service, following consultation with our workforce, and set out expectations about how we behave in the workplace. These are values are important to us because they influence the way that we approach the way we do things and deal with others. These are:

- **Professional** in all that we do - We act professionally by being the best that we can be, behaving with integrity and taking personal responsibility for our behaviour and decisions.
- **Open to Change** - By understanding the need to improve, we open ourselves up to new ideas and become a more sustainable organisation, ready for the future

- **We value and respect others:** By treating our community and service users with respect and consideration, we become a more customer-focused and inclusive organisation.
- **One Team** working together - We act as One Team when we respect and value each other and work together to create safer communities.

Further information about how the Service expects its employees to incorporate these values into the everyday behaviour and conduct can be found within our Behavioural Framework. ([link](#)).

Employees are always required, strive to demonstrate behaviour which upholds our core values. Behaviour which contravenes our values will be challenged and may lead to action under the Service's Disciplinary Procedure.

3.6 **Disclosure of Criminal Charges**

Employees MUST notify the Service at the earliest opportunity if they are under investigation, are arrested or are served with a caution or other penalty by a court of police officer (for instance, a restraining order) for their conduct / alleged conduct.

For the elimination of doubt, all such instances must be reported to the line manager who will take advice from the HR Department.

A decision on whether it is appropriate for an employee to continue in the role will be taken on a case by case basis, which may lead to a decision to suspend an employee pending further investigation by the Service under its disciplinary procedure.

It should be noted that the Service does not need to await the conclusion and outcome of criminal proceedings before reaching its own decision regarding potential misconduct.

3.7 **Disclosure of Information under Vetting and Barring Procedures and Security Checks**

The Service has a Disclosure and Barring Policy. This can be found here ([link](#)).

All new employees are subject to a Baseline Security Check on appointment and some roles will require higher levels of vetting or security checks. This will include disclosure of any unspent criminal convictions.

Roles requiring higher levels of vetting or security checks will be subject to re-checking at appropriate intervals.

Employees must notify the Service of any allegations, investigations or restrictions which may affect their role, particularly in relation to access to vulnerable people and children, as they arise. For the elimination of doubt, all such instances must be reported to the HR Department.

It should be noted that employees who will work from, or require unsupervised access to, the Joint Headquarters with the Police will be subject to police vetting.

3.8 **Disclosure of Personal Interests**

Officers who, by virtue of their role, provide appropriate advice to Members and fellow Officers must do so with impartiality and in the best interests of the Service, and must not allow a private interest to influence a public decision.

Officers who, by virtue of their role, are involved in the awarding of contracts or spending decisions (including income generated through the provision of services) must adhere to Financial Regulations and must not take any decision in pursuit of a private interest or allow a private interest to influence their decision making.

All personal associations or interest which may influence the impartiality of a decision must be declared through the Statement of Employee Interests. This may mean that the individual may be excluded from any meetings, representations or decisions in relation to particular matters in order to protect them and the Authority against any allegation of a conflict of interest.

3.9 **Disclosure of Information**

It is generally accepted that open government is best. The law requires that certain types of information must be available to Members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public.

Employees must check with their manager what sort of information they can give openly and ensure they know what information cannot be disclosed without specific authority. In general, information that is considered to be confidential or exempt, or concerning an individual Officer or service user or commercially sensitive information about contracts or tenders must not be disclosed.

Employees must not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor must they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way.

Employees who have regular contact with Members, employees/Officers must read and understand the Member/Officer protocol, which contains guidance on disclosure of information to Members.

Employees must not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.

3.10 **Disclosure of professional misconduct**

Employees who are members of professional bodies must disclose to the Service at the earliest opportunity any restrictions, investigations or actions taken in relation to their professional practice. For the elimination of doubt, all such instances must be reported to the line manager.

3.11 **Disclosure of driving restrictions**

Employees who are required to drive as part of their normal duties must notify the Service of any restrictions on their ability to hold a current driving license. For the elimination of doubt, all such instances must be reported to the line manager.

It should be noted that the Service routinely checks driving licenses through a third party agency.

3.12 **Driving standards**

Employee who drive service vehicles, or use their own vehicles on service business, must adhere to driving regulations at all times to ensure their own safety and that of other road users and passengers. It should be noted the service vehicles are monitored via telemetric devices and any breaches of driving standards or regulation will be investigated.

Personal vehicles used on service business must be road-worthy, taxed and insured for business use.

3.13 **Health and Safety**

It is the responsibility of all employees under Health and Safety legislation to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves or of persons who may be affected by their actions or omissions at work.

Service Health and Safety policies can be found in the Policy Centre on MyNet ([link](#)). The Written Statement of Intent can be found here ([link](#)).

The Service is committed to establishing safe systems of work, which include specific risk assessments and use of Personal Protective Equipment, and all employees are required to adhere to these at all times. A failure to comply with safety instructions, either by act or omission, will result in an investigation and may result in disciplinary action.

3.14 **Nepotism (Appointments and other employment matters)**

The Service has a policy on nepotism. This can be found here ([link](#)).

Employees are discouraged from forming relationships, other than a working relationship, where one of the parties is in a position to (directly or indirectly) exert any power or influence over the other, or to use their position or status to encourage a personal relationship for personal favour or career enhancement.

Any personal relationships must be disclosed in advance of engagement in any recruitment or promotion process where impartial judgement could be brought into question. This applies to relationships or association with both internal or external candidates.

3.15 **Political Affiliations**

The Service respects the rights of individual employees to hold political views, however care should be taken to ensure that such views are not in any way associated with an individual's employment with the Service – for instance, by making public statements in a way which references a link to the Service by reference, inference or image. Particular care should be taken when using personal media accounts that any comments or views are distinct from account profiles that may associate the individual with a role with the service – the Social Media Policy provides specific guidance on this ([link](#)).

Expressed views should not contravene the Service's values or refer to employees of the service or to Members of the Fire Authority and should not have the potential to bring the reputation of the service into disrepute.

Employees should take care not to air their political views at work, particularly where such view are unsolicited and may cause conflict or distress to others.

Employees who are considering election to public office must raise this with the HR Department. It should be noted that certain roles are restricted through legislation from holding public office.

Any complaints or media enquiries regarding the expression of political views by NFRS employees will be investigated and appropriate action taken.

3.16 **Public Speaking / Media Interviews**

Employees who are asked to take part in public meetings, events, or media interviews must seek authority to take part. If the invitation is extended as a representative of the NFRS then care should be taken to express the policies and position of the Fire Authority in a factual and unbiased way, and not to express personal opinions. The Corporate Communications team can provide guidance on dealing with the media.

3.17 **Safeguarding**

The Service has a Safeguarding Policy. This can be found here ([link](#)).

The Service has a responsibility to safeguard children (those under 18) and adults who may be considered (by virtue of age, immaturity, disability etc) to be vulnerable and has a duty to report concerns through the appropriate channels.

Employees must not enter into personal relationships of an intimate or sexual nature with any person deemed to be vulnerable (see above) with whom they come into contact through their role with the Service, or in any way use their position or status as an employee of the Service to develop such relationships. Any complaints or suspicions that such relationships exist or where inappropriate conduct is suspected will be investigated.

3.18 **Secondary employment**

The Service has a Secondary Employment Policy. This can be found here ([link](#)).

All operational employees must seek authority to undertake secondary employment in line with the provisions of the policy. Particular attention is drawn to any potential conflicts of interest which may arise, and the restriction on using service property, equipment (including uniform or PPE) or the name of the Service for business or private use.

3.19 **Smoking in the workplace**

The Service has a Smoke Free Working Policy. This can be found here ([link](#)).

The Service is committed, as part of its strategy to improve the health and well-being of its workforce, to encourage its employees to stop smoking

3.20 **Social Media**

The use of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, has made it much easier to exchange views, share information and engage with a wide range of people. The Service uses social media extensively to promote safety messages, inform the public and encourage feedback. However, the way in which we use such sites needs to be carefully managed – and any employee posting messages linked to the service need to exercise due caution.

Employees may not under any circumstances post unauthorised comments, images, or footage from or about incidents on social media sites. If personal sites refer to the Service, including reference to employment with the Service or images in uniform, then any postings must not contain any comments that may damage the reputation of the service or infer that the Service shares these views. This includes comments that may have the potential to be

offensive, upsetting or breach the privacy of others, may be construed as discriminatory against any group or individual or provide a personal view of Service policy or actions.

The Service has a Social Media Policy ([link](#)) which sets out how to use such sites and also the responsibilities of employees when posting on personal sites which may be linked back to the Service and may have the potential to bring the service into disrepute. Ensure that you use security and privacy settings if you do not wish comments to be widely shared and be aware that your comments may not be private and shared beyond your network of contacts.

Social media postings which may be initially meant for a limited audience can be re-posted and quickly fall into the public domain. In some cases, attracting media interest. If the service receives complaints or become aware of such postings then they will be investigated and this may result in disciplinary action.

3.21 **Standards of dress**

The Service has a Standards of Dress Policy. This can be found here ([link](#)).

Adherence to required standards are important to ensure that employees operate safely (for instance, the proper use of Personal Protective Equipment), present a professional and acceptable standard of appearance to service users and meet expectations about personal hygiene and decency in the workplace.

3.22 **Substance misuse**

The Service has a Substance Misuse Policy. This can be found here ([link](#)).

The Service has zero tolerance for employees who present for work under the influence of drink, drugs or any other substance which affects their ability to perform safely and competently at work. The Service operates a substance screening process and employees will be required to undergo testing in accordance with policy provisions.

Support is available for employees who declare a drug or alcohol dependency.

3.23 **Use of information**

Employees must only access, use or share information held on NFRS systems (electronic or manual) as part of their normal official duties (e.g. payroll, home visits, incidents, inspections, ICT support) following relevant procedures (e.g. Safe and Well, CCTV procedure, police information request form). For requests outside normal or familiar official duties (e.g. DWP

enquiry), check with a group manager (or equivalent) or the Information Governance Manager before responding.

Employees must comply with the Data protection policy ([POL 3004](#)) using appropriate security when using data, for example, NFRS ICT equipment and policies, door access controls. And only using the required amount of necessary personal information needed for an official duty, for example, necessary contact details to make a home visit, relevant information at a return to work meeting, debriefs. Employees must avoid identifying details like address or names when talking about work incidents for support from colleagues not involved in the incident, or from family or friends.

Employees may not use information obtained in the course of their employment with the Service for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way. This is particularly, but not only, pertinent to Officers who may be party to confidential information through attendance at Authority meetings, or links to elected Members.

Information requested by or released to external bodies, including the media, should be agreed by an appropriately authorised person before disclosure. No information relating to an employee of the Service may be disclosed other than by the HR Department (or approved out of hours process) with guidance when needed provided by the Information Governance Manager.

Responses to Freedom of Information (requests for information outside usual day-to-day requests) or Personal Data Information requests (Subject Access requests) must be forwarded to the Information Governance Manager (DataProtection@notts-fire.gov.uk) for response.

Breaches of data security policies and procedures will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure. See [Data Protection](#) and ICT policies on MyNet.

3.24 Whistleblowing Policy

The Authority has adopted a Whistleblowing Policy which enables the reporting confidentially on any alleged improper behaviour or action taken by an Officer or manager. Employees are expected, through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any alleged impropriety, fraud or breach of procedure or significant shortcomings in the provision of an agreed service.

The Policy can be found here ([link](#)).

SECTION 3: EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION

Equalities Statement

4.1 The Service's Commitment to Equality Statement can be found by following this [link](#). This statement has been endorsed by the Chief Fire Officer, the Fire Authority and our representative bodies. This reflects our responsibilities under the Equalities Act and the Public Sector Equalities Duty, and to our core values.

All Service employees are required to uphold and conduct themselves in line with the expectations of the commitment statement.

To meet the commitment to ensure equal access, this may sometimes mean treating particular service users differently to meet their specific needs i.e. disabled service users may need to be supported in a different way to those who do not have a disability.

We may also use positive action measures to encourage certain under-represented members of the community to engage with recruitment, or prevention activities. In this respect, the service is discharging its commitment to inclusion and equality and is not engaging in positive discrimination (which is unlawful). We have agreed a Joint Commitment to Improve Workforce Diversity with our representative bodies ([link](#))

4.2 **Discrimination**

The Service is committed to creating a workplace which is free from direct and indirect discrimination. This is reflected in the way we treat each other and our service users. This forms part of our Core Values.

Discrimination may take the form of (but is not restricted to) behaviours, actions and comments which may discriminate on the grounds of:

- Ethnicity (including race, colour and nationality)
- Gender
- Disability
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Religion or belief

The Service will ensure that all our employees understand that any form of discrimination, whether through word or deed, is unacceptable and will investigate and take action to address such behaviour. Every one of our

employees has a role to play in creating a workplace where people are accepted for who they are and what they contribute and treat each other, and the people we serve, with respect.

4.3 **Harassment and Bullying**

As a basic principle, employees must treat others as they wish to be treated themselves. Employees are expected to challenge or report behaviour which has the effect of undermining, demeaning, victimising or making themselves or others feel uncomfortable – this includes workplace ‘banter’.

The Service has agreed a Joint Statement on Harassment and Bullying ([link](#)) with its representative bodies which sets out our expectations of behaviour in the workplace.

The Service also has an Harassment and Bullying policy ([link](#)) which sets out how employees can deal with or raise complaints about unacceptable comments or behaviour. However, the best form of regulation is self-regulation and this means taking personal responsibility for our words and actions and their impact.

Managers will take action where they see, hear of or receive complaints, about unacceptable behaviour and these will be investigated without exception.

SECTION 4 – FINANCIAL STANDARDS

5.1 The Financial Regulations ([link](#)) and Financial Guidance Notes ([link](#)) set out the policies and procedures which apply to all financial transactions undertaken by the Authority, its designated budget holders and employees. This can be found here. A failure to comply with financial regulations may lead to action under the Disciplinary Procedure and may, in certain circumstances, be investigated as criminal fraud or contraventions of the standards applied to public sector employees.

5.2 Expenses and claims

The Service has a procedure for making legitimate claims for expenses incurred during authorised duty.

Employees are required to only claim for actual expenditure incurred, within the limits established, and supported by genuine receipts. Any claims which are suspected of being in breach of these rules will be investigated as possible fraud.

5.3 Procurement and contracts

The Service has policies in place for the management of procurement and contractual arrangements for services or goods provided. These can be found here ([link](#)).

Employees must follow the procurement processes, and all goods and services must be processed through the Agresso finance system. A failure to follow these procedures may result in investigation and disciplinary action.

Separation of Roles During Tendering

If involved in the tendering process and the appointment of contractors, Officers must be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles within the Authority. Officers who have both a client and contractor responsibility must be aware of the need for accountability and openness.

If employed in contractor or client units individuals must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and subcontractors.

Confidential matters on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors must not be disclosed to any unauthorised party or organisation.

Officers must ensure that no special favour is shown to current or recent former Officers or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior or managerial capacity.

5.4 Fraud, Corruption and Bribery

The Service has a number of policies which govern financial transactions, these can be found here ([link](#)).

This Counter fraud, money laundering, corruption and bribery policy ([link](#)) sets out the commitment of the Authority in dealing with allegations of fraud and corruption. It represents the position held by the Authority in respect of the confidential reporting of incidence of fraud and corruption that may amount to breach of the law. The Head of Finance and Treasurer is responsible for its implementation and monitoring.

The Authority expects all employees, elected Members, suppliers, contractors, partners and service users to be fair and honest in their dealings with the Authority and provide any help, information and support needed to deal with fraud and corruption. The Authority has in place a framework of checks and controls that are designed to reduce the likelihood of fraud occurring and will review the elements of this framework on a regular basis, especially if any problems come to light.

5.5 Corruption and Proceeds of Crime

It is a serious criminal offence to corruptly 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 an official capacity. If an allegation is made, it is for the Officers to demonstrate that any such rewards have not been corruptly obtained. Individuals must not show favouritism or give preferential treatment of friends, partners or relations in the allocation of Authority services or benefits.

Officers must report to the Head of Finance any dealings that they become aware of where they suspect that the money involved may have been acquired through illegal practices whether or not that money relates to a client's funds or those of any contractor or third party with whom the Council may be involved.

5.6 Personal interests

The Service retains a list of registered interests of its employees, which is regularly updated. The policy can be found here ([link](#)) and employees can register any new interests via MyNet ([link](#)). The Finance section undertakes a statutory annual review of the register at the beginning of each financial year and returns must be submitted even if there is nothing to declare.

Employees must declare any interest that they may have where they may influence the decision of the Authority, and particularly where they, or a relative, friend or associate, may benefit financially from such a decision. In this case, they will be expected to withdraw from any part of the decision-making process. For the avoidance of doubt, always declare a potential interest so that a judgement can be made.

5.7 **Potential Conflicts of Interest**

Officers must declare to their line manager any personal interests that could bring about conflict with the Authority's interests. These may be a personal interest in a matter if that matter affects the wellbeing or financial position of an individual, their relatives or their friends more than it would affect other people in the Authority's area. Such an interest may be either non-financial or financial. Personal interests would include the following:-

- membership or involvement with an organisation receiving grant aid from the Authority
- membership or involvement with an organisation or pressure group which may seek to influence the Authority's policies
- any financial interests which could conflict with the Authority's interests
- membership of any organisation not open to public without formal membership and with a commitment of allegiance which has secrecy about rules of membership or conduct
- membership of any organisation which is involved with the Authority in any formal way such as through any decision making process
- involvement with a corporate body involved in commercial dealings with the Authority

Any disclosure of interest will be recorded and reviewed at least annually.

If present at a meeting of the Authority, such as committee, when a matter in which any of the above interests are being discussed an Officer should, in accordance with the Authority's rules, declare their interests and leave the meeting unless the Members ask them to stay.

Any manager who receives a declaration of interest from an Officer must seek the advice of an appropriate Officer of the Authority as listed below before authorising any action if they are at all unsure about the appropriateness of the action concerned:

- Chief Fire Officer
- Deputy Chief Fire Officer
- Assistant Chief Fire Officer
- Monitoring Officer/ Clerk to the Fire Authority
- Head of Finance & Treasurer
- Head of People and Organisational Development

5.8 **Gifts and hospitality**

From time to time employees may be offered gifts in the form of free tickets, discounts or hospitality (this is not an exhaustive list) by external companies or other organisations in relation to their job.

Not all offers need be turned down – this will very much depend upon the value and incentive for making the offer. However, all gifts and offers must be

disclosed and a judgement made as to whether it is acceptable. Any gifts or offers over the value of £25 must be recorded on the Corporate Gifts and Hospitality Register. For the avoidance of doubt, always declare such offers so that a judgement can be made.

5.9 **Sponsorship**

The Service may sometimes offer sponsorship to groups that undertake activities that we wish to support.

Employees may not agree to sponsorship arrangements without authority to do so, or act in any manner which would lead to the financial gain for themselves, a family member, friend or associate.

5.10 **Custody and Security of Assets, Stores etc**

Employees have a responsibility to properly use and safeguard money, property and equipment belonging to the Fire Authority. Loss, misuse, negligence or criminal activity which results in a financial loss to the Service may lead to the Service seeking restitution by those employees involved. In the case of potential criminal action the Service will refer the matter to the police.

5.11 **Breach of these codes**

Any breach of these codes will result in investigation and possible disciplinary action. In certain circumstances, breaches may also lead to criminal investigations.

SECTION 5: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING DATA

6.1 Use of IT systems

The Service has policies governing the use of its IT systems and equipment. These must always be adhered to. Employees must familiarise themselves with these policies, and seek the advisement of the Head of IT if in any doubt:

- POL-2083 Email Policy ([link](#))
- POL-2084 Internet Acceptable Use Policy ([link](#))
- POL-2085 Personal Commitment Policy ([link](#))
- POL-2086 Mobile Computing Policy ([link](#))

6.2 Safeguarding of Data and Systems

All employees have a duty to retain the security of the systems and data and must only access those parts of the ICT system that they are personally authorised to use.

Personal logins and passwords must be protected and never be transferred or shared between employees or others. If an employee believes their password or equipment has been compromised in any way they shall immediately report it to ICT.

6.3 Data Protection/ GDPR

The Service has a Data Protection Policy. This can be found here ([link](#)).

The proper use and safeguarding of data, particularly personal data, is critical and all employees are required to manage data in a secure, confidential and appropriate way. Breaches of the Data Protection Policy will be investigated under the disciplinary procedure.

SECTION 6: RELATIONS WITH MEMBERS OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

7.1 Political neutrality

Employees serve the Fire Authority as a whole. It follows that they must serve all Councillors and must ensure that the individual rights of all Councillors are respected.

Some senior employees may also be required to advise political groups. They must do so in ways which do not compromise their political neutrality. Certain roles are “politically restricted” and must adhere to restrictions in place.

7.2 Member/Officer Protocol

Officers who, as part of their roles, have regular contact with Councillors, must adhere to the Member/Officer Protocol which contains guidance on disclosure of information to Members of the Authority. This is attached as Appendix 2.

7.3 Officer’s and Member’s Roles

Officers and Members are expected to work within and pursue the Authority’s policies. Equally Members must not interfere with operational matters that are the responsibility of managers.

Officers of the Authority have, in broad terms, the following main roles:

- They are the managers of the services for which the Authority has given them responsibility. They are accountable for the efficiency and effectiveness of those services and for proper professional practice in discharging their responsibilities.
- They are the professional advisors to the Authority, its political structures and Members in respect of their service and, as such, their professionalism should be respected.
- They may initiate policy proposals as well as being implementers of agreed policy.
- They ensure that the Authority always acts in a lawful manner.
- Officers can only advise Members on Authority issues and business and Members may not ask Officers to breach Authority policy or procedures.

Members can expect Officers to:-

- Maintain due confidentiality
- Perform their duties effectively and efficiently
- Behave in a professional manner, and
- Be helpful and respectful to Members

7.4

7.5 **Officer/Member Relationships**

Mutual respect between Officers and Members is essential to good local government. Close personal familiarity between Officers and individual Members or between Officers can damage the relationship and prove embarrassing to other Officers and Members and must therefore be avoided. Close personal relationships between Officers working together or between Members and Officers may cause a perception of bias or favouritism. To avoid this problem, Officers must declare to their Manager:-

- any close personal relationship with another Officer in the same section or area of work; or any close personal relationship with a Member.

It is not possible to define exactly the range of relationships that would be considered as close or personal. Examples, however, would include a family or sexual relationship and regular social mixing such as holidays or evening meals together.

The Authority has adopted a Member/Officer Protocol. If you regularly have contact with Members, you should read and understand the protocol.

7.6 **The Local Community and Service Users**

Officers must always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community as defined by the policies of the Authority.

7.7 **Contractors**

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, must be known to the appropriate manager. Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit in accordance with the Authority's Financial and Contracts Rules and the Best Value regime and no special favour must be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives in the tendering process. No part of the local community must be discriminated against.

If Officers engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with the contractors, they must declare that relationship at the earliest opportunity to their manager.

Support information

Appendices

Appendix One – How we will deliver on the Five Fire and Rescue Service Ethical Principles

Appendix 1

How we will deliver the **Five Fire and Rescue Service Ethical Principles**

Community at our Heart

We will put the interest of the public, the community, and service users at the heart of all that we do.

To achieve this, we will:

- Act with the interest of the public at the heart of everything we do
- Be selfless in our service to the community and act with empathy, compassion, and respect. We will always involve, consult, and listen to people to ensure that we continue to have a wider understanding of the impact that service activity has on improved community outcomes
- Be concerned more with the needs of others than our own
- Foster and enable continuous improvement and be committed to developing an FRS which delivers improved community outcomes through efficient and effective service delivery
- Continually demonstrate our commitment to improving public safety, with public benefit and value at the centre of everything we do
- Be ambassadors and role models for our FRS, maintaining an honest, open, and transparent approach
- Be a positive presence in our communities, having high personal integrity and enhancing our reputation within our communities.

Integrity

We will act with integrity including being open, honest, truthful, accurate and consistent in our actions, words, decisions, methods, and outcomes.

To achieve this, we will:

- Value honesty, probity, accuracy, clarity, and fairness in our interactions with everybody whether within the FRS or externally, and seek to promote integrity in all aspects of our professional endeavours
- Act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner using all evidence and the data available
- Continue to foster trust and build collaborative working relationships, demonstrating a clear and accepted understanding of our roles and responsibilities

- Welcome and encourage challenge, and be willing to adapt our thinking and respond appropriately
- Recognise and challenge behaviour where it falls short of these ethical principles
- Avoid placing ourselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence our work. We will remain impartial and objective
- Never act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for personal gain. We will declare and resolve any interests and relationships and maintain personal and professional boundaries
- Remain consistent in our ethical and moral behaviour, ensuring that is it reflective of the FRS cultural values that make it a positive place to work.

Dignity and Respect

We will treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.

To achieve this, we will:

- Always demonstrate unbiased judgement and behaviour and act in a respectful manner. We will act with decency and impartiality. Recognising and understanding unconscious biases will allow FRSs to consider all perspectives when making decisions
- Strive to do the right thing using strong moral and ethical principles in delivering effective public services and in working together
- Remain committed to supporting the development of all staff and ensuring a transparent, objective, and consistent approach to recruitment, progression, and the management of performance
- Act in a way that creates an environment of openness and trust
- Treat people with respect at all times and without discrimination, harassment, or bullying. There is no place in our FRS for such behaviours and we will challenge and address any form of inappropriate behaviour.

Leadership

We will be positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership at all levels.

We will be accountable for our behaviour, decisions and actions and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.

To achieve this, we will:

- Be committed as senior leaders to the implementation of this Core Code and drive the strategies that underpin this.
- Take responsibility for continuous improvement in our performance
- Remain accountable to the public, our employers, and each other and, as such, accountable for our decisions and actions
- Be willing to take responsibility for our own actions and for the consequences associated with our actions
- Recognise leaders emerge at all levels within an organisation and it is incumbent upon all leaders to role model positive behaviours within both the workplace and the community.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

We will continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within the Fire and Rescue Service and the wider communities in which we serve.

We will stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

To achieve this, we will:

- Listen to, understand, and recognise the diverse needs of people to ensure that information, services, and products are accessible and inclusive
- Ensure that our buildings, facilities, and procurement processes reflect our strong commitment to EDI
- Recognise that unconscious bias exists and ensure that we take the perspective of all groups into account when making decisions or developing policies
- Demonstrate behaviours which recognise and celebrate the values of diversity of thought, identity, culture, background, and experience, both within the workforce and our communities
- Challenge and address any discriminatory behaviours, policies, and procedures

- Continue to address under-representation in our workforce at all levels and may use lawful positive action measures to do this
- Attract, recruit, and develop a talented and diverse workforce and will help all employees to develop their professional potential, ensuring that we continue to learn from each other.