

RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD



CODE OF CONDUCT (Part 1) *For Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board Employees* **HR1**

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Foreword

Code of Conduct for Employees

This Code of Conduct applies to all employees of Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board and sets out the standards of conduct that the Board expects from you as a Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board employee.

You are asked to read the Code of Conduct carefully and to follow the Code's requirements at all times. I hope that you will find it helpful in your employment with the Board.

If there are any areas on which you need guidance or you have concerns about any aspect of the code, you should contact your line managers or the Board's Personnel Practitioner for further advice.

The Code has been developed in consultation with the recognised Trade Unions.

Robert Nicol
Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Code of Conduct for Employees

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The public expects a high standard of conduct from all local government employees. The Board's Code of Conduct for Employees sets out the minimum standards which are expected of all employees of Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board and provides you with guidance about your rights and duties at work.
- 1.2 These standards will be used as a benchmark of good practice by the Local Government Ombudsman where a complaint of maladministration has been made. The Code also incorporates 'Seven Principles of Public Life' identified by the Nolan Committee on standards in public life.
- 1.3 The Code provides employees' with guidance on the standards of conduct appropriate for public service and employees' should familiarise themselves with its content. A breach of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal. Due to the nature of your work, some parts of the Code may apply more than others but all employees will be expected to comply with the Code.
- 1.4 Employees who also have line management responsibilities should ensure employees reporting to them have access to the Code of Conduct.
- 1.5 Although contractors, consultants or volunteers are not directly employed by the Board, they will be expected to observe and comply with the Board's Code of Conduct for Employees. Elected Members have their own Code of Conduct which is available from Committee Services.

2. The 'Seven Principles of Public Life'

Selflessness: You should not take decisions which will result in any financial or other benefit to yourself, your family or your friends. Decisions should be based solely on the Board's best interests.

Integrity: You should not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to an individual or an organisation which might influence you in your work with the Board.

Objectivity: Any decisions which you make in the course of your work with the Board, including making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits must be based solely on merit.

Accountability: You are accountable to the Board as your employer. Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board, in turn, is accountable to the public.

Openness: You should be as open as possible in all the decisions and actions that you take. You should give reasons for your decisions and should not restrict information unless this is clearly required by Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board policy or by the law.

Honesty: You have a duty to declare any private interests which might affect your work with the Board.

Leadership: If you are a manager, you should promote and support these principles by your leadership and example.

3. Relationships

3.1 Personal Conduct

- 3.1.1 As a public official the way you behave during working hours and any misconduct outside your working hours reflects on the image of the Board and may have a bearing on your employment with the Board.
- 3.1.2 Under the Board's Health and Safety Policy and the Health and Safety Act 1974 employees should not place themselves, work colleagues or members of the public at risk to their health and safety.
- 3.1.3 You must not attend work under the influence of either alcohol or drugs, as these may affect your ability to undertake your duties safely and effectively. Should you attend work under the influence of either alcohol or drugs you will be liable for action under the Board's Disciplinary Procedures.
- 3.1.4 You may seek support and assistance for any health and wellbeing issues, including alcohol and drugs, from your line manager, a trade union representative, Personnel Practitioner or counselling service provided by Occupational Health.
- 3.1.5 Should you be charged or convicted of a criminal offence (including being released on bail) which is likely to adversely affect your work or your working relationship with the Board, you must advise your Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer immediately. Such charges or convictions may result in action being taken against you under the Board's Disciplinary Procedures.
- 3.1.6 If you drive as part of your duties you must inform your line manager immediately of any driving conviction incurred in the course of your duties or outwith work, and/or any current or pending driving disqualification that would impact on your ability to fully carry out your work duties. You must also inform your line manager of health and wellbeing issues that may have an impact on your ability to drive or that would normally require notification to the DVLA.
- 3.1.7 Upon notification of a driving disqualification your line manager must relieve you of all driving duties with immediate effect and in consultation with you, seek to identify suitable means by which you may continue to undertake your normal duties or alternative work activities. Advice must be sought from the Board's Personnel Practitioner to identify, in consultation with the employee and their line-manager, the most appropriate course of action.
- 3.1.8 All employees of the Board will be required to complete a Basic Disclosure Check. If your job involves regular contact with children or protected adults, or in the administration of the law or in certain other sensitive areas and professions, the Board reserves the right to require you to undergo a Disclosure Scotland Police Check/PVG check at any stage of your employment.

3.1.9 You have a duty to make any payments due to the Council in good time. Regular checks will be made by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer where they are legally entitled to do so. This will ensure that you are not in arrears with payments such as council tax, rent etc. If you are experiencing difficulties in making payments, advice is available from various sources such as the:

- Council Tax section within Finance and Resources;
- The local neighbourhood offices of Development and Housing;
- HR and Organisational Development, Finance and Resources;
- The Trade Unions.

3.2 The Public

3.2.1 You may have contact with members of the public as users of services, clients or citizens and you should always be courteous and helpful.

3.2.2 Where an employee considers they have been bullied, harassed, discriminated against or victimised during the course of their Board duties by a third party (member of the public, customer, client, contractor), this should be reported to their line manager at the earliest opportunity. In such instances, further investigation may be required and any unacceptable behaviour should be dealt with as outlined by the Board's relevant Health and Safety Policies.

3.3 Elected Members

3.3.1 Both Elected Members and employees are servants of the public, and they are indispensable to each other. Employees are responsible to the Board. Their role is to give advice to Elected Members and the Council and to carry out the Council's work under the direction and control of the Board.

3.3.2 Elected Members are free to approach any Council service for such information, explanation and advice about the service's functions as they may reasonably need in order to assist them in carrying out their duties as members of the Council. Such approaches should normally be directed to the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer or another senior officer of the service concerned. If you are called upon to provide support and briefings to party groups you should follow Board's protocol for member/officer relations. Before providing such information, you should inform your line manager.

3.4 Contractors

3.4.1 You must be fair and impartial in your dealings with contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers. Close personal familiarity between employees and contractors can damage the working relationships and reputation of the Board.

3.4.2 If you are involved in the tendering process you must follow the Board's procurement procedures and rules for tenders and contracts. Further information can be obtained from the Board's Personnel Practitioner.

4. Bribery, Fraud and Corruption

- 4.1 You must not use your position with the Board or misrepresent your personal circumstances in relation to any Board process in order to obtain a gain that you are not be entitled to or to further your own interests or the interests of others who do not have a right to benefit under Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board's policies.
- 4.2 You should be aware that under the Bribery Act 2010 it is a serious criminal offence to:
- offer, promise or give someone a reward to make them perform their functions or activities improperly;
 - accept, agree to accept or request a reward in return for performing a relevant function or activity improperly;
 - bribe a foreign public official in order to win business, keep business or gain business advantage for the organisation.
- 4.3 Any suspected incident of bribery, fraud and corruption will be investigated internally and where the Board consider that a breach has occurred this will be referred to the relevant regulatory authority for further action as appropriate. This could lead to a criminal conviction and may result in a hearing under the Board's Disciplinary Procedures.

5. Your Rights as an employee and member of the public

5.1 Public statements

- 5.1.1 If you use Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board's services you are entitled to express a view on the quality of service you receive. However, you should not make use of information obtained through your work with the Board.
- 5.1.2 Criticism of the Board or officers of the Board made via the media, social media or the internet outside of work may be investigated under the Board's Disciplinary Procedures.
- 5.1.3 Trade Union representatives may use the media, social media or the internet to communicate with their members or make a statement on behalf of their trade union.

5.2 Access to your Elected Member

- 5.2.1 As a member of the public, you are entitled to raise with your Elected Member any complaint which you have about the services of Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board. If your complaint concerns any aspect of your work with Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board, you should follow the Board's Grievance Procedures.

5.3 Fair and reasonable treatment at work – Respect at Work

- 5.3.1 You are entitled to expect fair and reasonable treatment from your colleagues, managers and from Elected Members. If you feel that you have been unfairly treated or have been discriminated against, you are entitled to make use of the Board's appropriate policies, for example, Respect at Work or the Grievance Procedures.
- 5.3.2 The Board will not tolerate bullying, discrimination, harassment or victimisation of an employee who has raised concerns through this process. It is the duty of all employees to ensure that colleagues do not suffer any type of unacceptable behaviour.
- 5.3.3 It should be noted that if an employee is already the subject of action under another Board policy e.g. Disciplinary Procedures this will not automatically be halted as a result of them expressing their concerns under the Respect at Work Policy or Grievance Procedures.

6. Disclosure of Information

6.1 Contact with the media

- 6.1.1 In your work with Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board you must get Board authorisation before media contact can take place. All contact with the media (press/television/radio/social media) should be referred in the first instance to the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer.
- 6.1.2 Do not respond to enquiries by the media, or comment to the media on situations described or statements made. You should inform the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer of any media contact.

7. Expressing Concerns Outwith Line Management Policy

- 7.1 The Board is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability. In line with that commitment, if you have a serious concern about illegality, malpractice, wrongdoing or serious failures of standards of work you are encouraged to come forward and voice any concerns. The Board's Expressing Concerns Outwith Line Management Policy provides safeguards for employees and public officials who disclose unlawful and improper conduct including breaches of this Code.
- 7.2 Concerns should be made in writing, usually to the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer. Where you do not feel able to put your concern in writing, contact can also be made by telephone or in person to an appropriate officer.

7.3 Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

- 7.3.1 This Act makes provision for the protection of individuals who disclose information which, they believe, has resulted in any of the following occurring:

- (i) that a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed;
- (ii) that a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which they are subject;
- (iii) that a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur;
- (iv) that the health or safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered;
- (v) that the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged;
- (vi) that information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the preceding paragraphs has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

7.4 Confidentiality

- 7.4.1 The Board will maintain the confidentiality, wherever possible, of the identity of the employee who has raised the concern. It must be appreciated, however, that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by the individual may be required as part of the evidence.

7.5 Anonymous allegations

- 7.5.1 Employees are encouraged to put their names to any allegations made. Concerns expressed anonymously will be investigated at the discretion of the Board. In such a case the employee under investigation must be notified of the allegation against them.

7.6 Untrue allegations

- 7.6.1 If an employee makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If however an employee makes malicious or vexatious allegations, disciplinary action may be considered.

8. Working with Elected Members, Political Neutrality and Politically Restricted Posts

- 8.1 As an employee of the Board you must serve the Council and Elected Members, regardless of their political outlook. The Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer has ultimate responsibility to help ensure that the policies of the Board are implemented. If you are asked to provide assistance with a matter which is clearly party political or which does not have a clear link with the work of the Board, you should refer the matter to your line manager.

8.2 A small number of posts are “politically restricted” in terms of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended). A person who holds such a post is disqualified from being or becoming a member of:

- a local authority;
- the Scottish Parliament;
- the House of Commons;
- the European Parliament.

9. Conflict of Interest

9.1 Private Interests

9.1.1 You must not allow any private interest to influence your decisions at work and be aware that even where there is no conflict that your conduct may lead to a perceived conflict of interest. If you are involved in working or in transactions being carried out by Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board in which close members of your family or people living in the same household as you may have financial interests, these interests must be declared to and recorded by your line manager.

9.2 Membership of organisations or clubs

9.2.1 If by being a member of an organisation or a club there might be a conflict of interest in relation to any aspect of your employment with Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board, you must declare this to your line manager. This also applies to membership of organisations or clubs which are not open to the public.

9.3 Political, professional and trade union activity

9.3.1 Employees who are not in a politically restricted post will have the right to engage in political or professional activities but must ensure that these do not result in an actual or perceived conflict of interest with your official duties with the Board.

9.3.2 If you are a trade union or workplace representative you must ensure that if you make public comment that this is made on behalf of the trade union or association you represent and not the Board.

9.4 Employment outwith Council working hours

9.4.1 Normally you will be able to undertake paid employment/self-employment outside Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board unless there is a clear conflict of interest, or is it likely to have an adverse effect on your work with the Board.

9.4.2 You are not allowed to use Board equipment and resources in any outside employment. If you are unsure if the other employment may be in conflict with the Board’s interests you should seek guidance from the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer.

9.4.3 Divisional Assessor & ERO's must not engage in any other business or undertake any additional appointment without the express consent of the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer.

9.5 Other outside duties or services during working hours

9.5.1 During the period of their employment, employees will not be permitted to hold any outside office, position of employment, the duties of which would entail their absence from work during normal working hours, without the consent of the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer.

9.5.2 The Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer can authorise an employee to be absent occasionally and temporarily during working hours to attend to duties or services of an honorary, charitable or philanthropic character, so long as these do not interfere with efficient discharge of Board duties, or to take leave of absence during office hours for similar duties or services. Any leave granted for these purposes will be in line with the Board's Special Leave Policy.

9.5.3 The Board supports employee volunteering. Employees taking part in this during normal working hours must have prior approval from their line manager. Any volunteering activities carried out by an employee during or outwith normal working hours should not be in conflict with the employee's role within the Board.

9.6 Invitations to give lectures, broadcasts, speeches etc

9.6.1 If you wish to accept invitations to undertake lectures, appropriate to your professional qualifications, you may do so and retain any fees, providing such lectures are given outwith normal office hours, and do not prejudice the interests of the Board.

9.6.2 In the case of lectures undertaken during normal hours, where the lectures cover a given period or pattern you must get prior agreement from the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer. Any fees received, excluding out-of-pocket expenses, must be paid to the Board, or the time off must be set against your annual leave entitlement or deducted from your flexible working hours balance.

10. Acceptance of gifts, hospitality and other benefits

10.1 Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board has established a policy on the accepting of gifts and hospitality. This advises on the correct approach to take if you are offered gifts, hospitality or other benefits in connection with your official duties.

10.2 All offers of gifts and hospitality made to you, as an officer of the Board, must be recorded in the register of gifts and hospitality, even if they are declined. You should also be cautious and mindful of a giver's expectations in relation to gifts and hospitality, particularly where offered to close family members.

10.3 The Code of Conduct for Officers on the Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality is available from the Board's Personnel Practitioner.

11. Use of Board Resources

- 11.1 Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board provides a wide range of services to the public. It is crucial that these services are provided as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- 11.2 In your work capacity you have access to a variety of resources such as equipment, vehicles, materials, finances and any other items under the control of the Board. You should clearly understand your contractual obligations to Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board and you must not use any of the Board's resources to assist with commitments to non-Board employment outwith Board working hours or for any other personal use unless authorised or in line with the ICT Acceptable Use Policy.
- 11.3 There can be occasions where the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer, or other nominated officers, are satisfied that there are justifiable reasons for the temporary removal of resources from Board premises for use for other purposes. For example, where you are undertaking a course of study recognised by the Board, it would be considered reasonable to allow you to take a portable personal computer home in the evening.
- 11.4 If you are authorised to use resources for your work or outside working hours you must ensure that they are stored securely at all times.

12. Use of the Board Email System

- 12.1 Email is an important and significant electronic channel of communication within the Board and to communicate with external organisations. Responsible use of the email system is vital to ensure integrity of the Board's processes and systems, as well as providing assurance to partners and stakeholders that ours and their information is being handled and managed appropriately. You can only use the Board's email system for business use. **Personal use is not permitted at any time.**
- 12.2 The Board reserves the right to access, record or monitor the contents of emails both sent and received via the Board email system for business purposes. Inappropriate use of the Board's email system will be investigated under the Board's Disciplinary Procedures. The Board's ICT Acceptable Use Policy is available from your manager.

13. Use of the Internet

- 13.1 You can use the internet for business purposes during normal working hours and for personal use outwith normal working hours e.g. on lunch breaks or other unpaid breaks. You must not use your access to the internet during normal working hours to carry out any personal business.

- 13.2 Use of the internet is subject to monitoring controls and regularly reported to senior management. You should not use the internet to make negative or defamatory comments about the Board, its agreed decisions or policies, or its officers or Elected Members. Such behaviour will be investigated under the Board's Disciplinary Procedures.

14. Use of Social Media

- 14.1 Employees are permitted access to social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter on the Board's network for business purposes in accordance with the Board's ICT Acceptable Use Policy and Social Media Guidance.
- 14.2 All employees should be aware of their conduct and responsibilities when communicating online and using social media sites. Employees should familiarise themselves with the guidance on the use of online communications and in particular social media in the Use of Social Media at Work and for Personal Use Guidance. The guidance also outlines how unacceptable use may be addressed by the Board.
- 14.3 If it comes or is brought to the Board's attention and where through investigation it is found that the use of social media has been unacceptable, this may lead to disciplinary action being taken. This will also be the case with unacceptable social media use on the employee's own personal device or home computer. Inappropriate online behaviour can result in criminal action or in some instances civil action brought by others. Employees should also be aware that in circumstances where their behaviour is unlawful i.e. a hate crime incident such as sectarianism, racism or homophobia, the Board will report this to the Police.

15. Data Protection and ICT Security

- 15.1 The Data Protection Act 1998 and its replacement the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) imposes obligation on the Board as a data controller, in relation to the processing of personal data. You will have a duty to ensure that the integrity of any personal information about a living individual with which you come into contact in the course of your employment, is accurate and protected at all times. You must regard this information as strictly confidential and you must undertake not to make any unauthorised disclosure at any time.
- 15.2 All employees are responsible for the security of Board information they come into contact with and in whatever format e.g. paper, electronically, multimedia such as audio tapes, CD or DVD, or stored on devices such as USB pens, disks, or recorded via systems such as CCTV equipment.
- 15.3 Any compromise of the security of any information owned by the Board will be investigated and failure to comply with these obligations may result in disciplinary action including dismissal. Further guidance is contained in the Board's Data Protection Policy, Information Security Policy and Guidance on the Responsible Use of Personal Data and Confidential Information.

16. Use of Financial Resources

- 16.1 Public funds entrusted to you must not be used for a personal purpose at any time. If you are responsible for handling cash you must ensure it is held securely.

17. Recruitment and Selection

- 17.1 The Board requires all applicants for jobs to disclose all contraventions of, or failures to comply with, any provisions of law, whether committed in the UK or elsewhere, unless the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act applies and the rehabilitation period has expired. Disclosure checks are conducted on all successful applicants within the Board and PVG checks will be carried out on successful applicants for certain posts within the Board.
- 17.2 Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board has a Recruitment and Selection policy based on the principles contained in the Cosla Code on Recruitment and Selection. All appointments must be made on the basis of merit.
- 17.3 If you are involved in the recruitment and selection process, and have any kind of relationship which might affect your ability to be impartial, that relationship must be declared to your line manager. Your manager will then decide whether you can participate in the recruitment and selection activities.
- 17.4 You must not lobby an Elected Member or another colleague either directly or indirectly to secure your appointment or promotion, or the appointment or promotion of another person. If you have been lobbied by an applicant, another colleague, an Elected Member or any other person, you must report the matter to your manager.
- 17.5 Canvassing of Elected Members or employees of the Board, directly or indirectly in connection with any appointment being made by the Board, shall disqualify the candidate.
- 17.6 Where an employee or Elected Member is involved in the shortlisting or interviewing process and is aware of a relationship with any of the applicants they must disclose this and the Board's Personnel Practitioner must be informed.

18. Relevant Council Policies, Procedures and supporting guidance

- 18.1 This Code of Conduct (Part 1) should be read in conjunction with the following Board Policies, Procedures and supporting guidance:
- Disciplinary Procedures and supporting guidance;
 - Grievance Procedures and supporting guidance;
 - ICT Acceptable Use Policy;
 - Data Protection Policy;
 - Social Media Guidance;
 - Code of Conduct (Part 2) – Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality;
 - Code of Conduct (Part 3) – Guidance Notes on whistleblowing;

- Expressing Concerns Outwith Line Management Policy;
- Equality and Diversity Policy;
- Respect at Work Policy;
- Recruitment and Selection Guidance (Policy document due Jun 2018)