

# Croydon Council's Code of Conduct relating to those engaged in resident involvement

This Code of Conduct applies to residents, councillors and council officers whilst they are carrying out their role in resident involvement in Croydon, such as taking part in groups, or completing surveys etc.

## 1. Common principles

- 1.1 All elements of the following code, apply equally to residents, officers and councillors, hereafter referred to as participants, unless specifically noted.
- 1.2 All participants must understand and appreciate their respective positions and responsibilities if a strong partnership is to exist.
- 1.3 Participants are required at all times to act in a courteous manner and strive to develop and maintain a balanced relationship of mutual respect which is open and honest. Personal attacks, offensive and abusive comments are not acceptable.
- 1.4 In carrying out their role, no participant will discriminate against any person in a manner that is contrary to Croydon Council's Equal Opportunities Policy on any ground whatever. All participants shall acknowledge that everybody has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of ethnic or national origins, disability, gender, marital status, age, sexuality, religion, or any other matter which causes people to be treated with injustice.
- 1.5 Participants must consider the council's obligation, under health & safety, human rights and other legislation, to ensure the effective operation of the groups and consultation processes and its duty to protect residents, councillors and members of staff from verbal, physical abuse or harassment.
- 1.6 Participants must declare an interest if they have any personal, financial or material interest in any matter being considered (for example, if a panel is considering a change in a policy, a resident must inform the panel if they have a close relative who might gain advantage from the change; or if they have an interest in a contractor whose work is being discussed).
- 1.7 At meetings, all participants shall at all times operate within the rules laid down in the constitution of the group which they are attending.

## **Officer and councillor code**

- 2.1 At all times, officers and councillors shall act in a professional manner and shall treat residents' representatives with courtesy and respect.
- 2.2 Requests for residents to attend meetings shall be kept to a reasonable level. It must be acknowledged that residents give their time on a voluntary basis and demands on their time shall be kept to the minimum possible.
- 2.3 Meetings organised by the council for residents' representatives shall be held in a suitable venue which is accessible and, as far as possible, held at a time which does not exclude sections of the community (e.g. people who work or have child care responsibilities).
- 2.4 Officers shall make themselves available to meet residents' representatives providing reasonable notice is given and demands are not excessive.
- 2.5 Officers shall, with reasonable notice, supply information to residents' representatives regarding the delivery of services and local activities. This will not include information relating to individual residents (except at that individual's request) or to staff which is confidential.
- 2.6 Officers shall not provide more favourable treatment to residents' representatives in relation to the provision of their services, nor shall they be treated any less favourably.
- 2.7 Officers are responsible to the council. Their job is to carry out the council's work, with reference to the policies and decisions made by the elected councillors.
- 2.8 Officers will work with and give advice to, residents' representatives on the operation of this Code of Conduct.

## **3. Residents' representatives code**

- 3.1 Residents' representatives shall be courteous at all times in their dealings with officers, councillors, contractors, agencies, other residents and members of the public.
- 3.2 Residents' representatives are responsible for representing the best interests of Service users. They should try to reflect and understand the views of the community.
- 3.3 Officers shall not be asked for their personal views about the policies, management, staff or elected councillors of Croydon Council.
- 3.4 Residents must respect the impartiality of officers and must undertake not to make political statements of a derogatory nature at meetings nor in their role as a residents' representative.

- 3.5 Residents shall not give officers instructions on the day to day performance of their duties. Residents wishing to comment on the performance of an officer, should do so through an appropriate manager.
- 3.6 Officers and councillors will try to attend all relevant meetings. However, residents should appreciate that such availability will sometimes be restricted by personal or operational commitments. Residents should give an officer or councillor at least two weeks notice of all meetings.
- 3.7 Residents will not speak or write to external groups or agencies on behalf of their group or panel without the prior agreement of the group or panel they represent. Any correspondence sent on behalf of the group or panel should be agreed in advance by the group or panel and copies provided to all group or panel members.
- 3.8 Where residents are representing their group or panel at another panel or working group, it is the responsibility of that resident to represent the views of their parent group and feedback to their parent group.
- 3.9 From time to time, residents will acquire and have access to confidential information and information that has not yet been made public. When residents are advised that information is confidential it must not be disclosed to other people under any circumstances. Residents may be asked to sign an agreement that such information will not be disclosed. Such information must not be used for personal gain.

#### **4. Legal considerations**

- 4.1 Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, the council has a statutory duty to ensure the physical and psychological health and safety of its workforce, including safe systems of work and support. This includes taking reasonable care, and such steps as are necessary, to remove or avoid a reasonably foreseeable risk of stress or anxiety induced personal injury.
- 4.2 The council must also be mindful of its obligations to councillors, officers and residents under The Human Rights Act 1998 and other appropriate legislation.

#### **5. Breach of the Code of Conduct**

- 5.1 Should there be a breach of this code by any participant, at a meeting, the chair of the meeting has the power to give a verbal warning to the individual. In addition any member of the group or panel can propose that another member be given a verbal or written warning.
- 5.2 If, despite a warning, a participant continues to breach this Code of Conduct, or otherwise seriously disrupts a meeting, they can be expelled or suspended from further participation in meetings by the group or panel.

- 5.3 If the chair of the meeting fails to expel a participant who continues to breach this code, officers and councillors will refer those present to this Code of Conduct but reserve the right to withdraw from the meeting.
- 5.4 As this Code of Code of Conduct applies to participants involved in various roles within Croydon's resident participation framework, participants must note that breaches of the code, outside of meetings, will be considered and dealt with in a similar manner. Abusive or racist language will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- 5.5 The council may also take reasonable steps to deal with disruptive or discourteous behaviour that is detrimental to the effective operation of residents' groups and panels. This may involve restricting access to meetings or contact with officers or councillors.
- 5.6 If a participant feels they have been treated unfairly in relation to any breaches of the Code of Conduct, they are entitled to use the Council's formal complaints procedure.