

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>Title:</b>	Employee Handbook
<b>Meeting/Date:</b>	Corporate Governance Panel – 26 March 2014
<b>Executive Portfolio:</b>	Resources: Councillor J A Gray
<b>Report by:</b>	Internal Audit Manager
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	All Wards

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### Executive Summary

Whilst the Local Government Act 2000 made provision for a statutory Code of Conduct for local government employees, no such Code has been issued. The Council has adopted a local Code.

An employee handbook - Do It Right - has been written as a replacement for the Employees' Code of Conduct. A draft copy of the handbook has been circulated to all Panel members.

The handbook, which also includes an employee code of ethics, details the core values and standards of ethical behaviour required to be exhibited by all employees of the Council.

Included in the handbook are all the requirements of the previously agreed local Code. The Code is primarily principal based.

Whilst handbooks of this type are common in the private sector they are uncommon in local government. Identifying good public sector practice was particularly challenging. Research identified three particularly good and useful information sources - the *Institute of Business Ethics*, the *Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector* and *Swindon Borough Council*. All of these organisations have allowed extracts from their publications to be included in the handbook.

At the time of writing this report the consultation process (with Staff Council, the Culture & Compliance Board, HR and others) had not been completed. It is likely that the consultation process will result in changes being made to the draft handbook.

All employees will be required to 'sign up' to the handbook annually. As the handbook is different, in both content and format than previous versions, training is to be provided through LGSS HR, for employees on the core values and standards.

### Approval of the Employee Handbook

Chief Officers' Management Team wish to see the handbook introduced as soon as possible. The current employee's Code of Conduct is included in the Constitution and the handbook, once approved, will replace it.

The Panel are responsible for recommending to Council changes to the Constitution although a report elsewhere on the agenda, includes a suggestion that constitutional matters become the responsibility of the Standards Committee.

Proposed amendments to the Code of Conduct have previously been reviewed by the Employment Panel, who are next due to meet on 25 June. If the Panel were to receive and consider the formal views of Employment Panel prior to making any recommendation to Council on the introduction of the employee handbook, then it is likely (after taking into account the meeting dates of this Panel, the Employment Panel and Standards Committee), that the proposed adoption of the employee handbook by Council would not occur until 30 July at the earliest.

It is proposed that the Panel retain responsible for recommending the adoption of the employee handbook to the 30 April Council meeting. This to be done by delegating responsibility for approval of the handbook to the Panel Chairman. This process will allow the Employment Panel to be consulted informally on the contents of the employee handbook prior to the Chairman being asked to approve it.

### **Financial implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. The training costs associated with the introduction of the handbook will be met from existing budgets.

### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Panel

1. Consider the Draft Handbook
2. Request the Employment Panel to consider the Handbook together with any changes proposed by this Panel, and
3. Delegate responsibility to the Managing Director for approving the final version of the Employee Handbook following consultation with the Chairmen of the Employment Panel and the Corporate Governance Panel.

### **Background Papers**

Institute of Business Ethics – Illustrative Code of Business Ethics  
The Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector  
Swindon Borough Council – Code of Conduct

### **Contact Officer**

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