

PFCC Decision Report

Report reference number: 164-23

Classification: OFFICIAL

Title of report: Staff Code of Conduct

Area of county / stakeholders affected: All PFCC staff

Report by: Pippa Brent-Isherwood (Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer)

Chief Officer: Pippa Brent-Isherwood (Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer)

Date of report: 2 January 2024

Enquiries to: Pippa Brent-Isherwood (Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer)

1. Executive Summary

This decision report proposes an updated Staff Code of Conduct for approval and adoption.

2. Recommendations

That the PFCC approves and adopts the updated Staff Code of Conduct attached at Appendix 1.

3. Background to the Proposal

The current staff Code of Conduct dates back to 2014. It is nothing more than a very short and simple statement of the then PCC's values and behaviours, which have since been updated. As such, it is no longer fit for purpose and either needs to be decommissioned or refreshed in order to be useful for staff and managers.

4. Proposal and Associated Benefits

An updated Staff Code of Conduct is proposed for adoption at Appendix 1. This builds on an earlier document entitled “Being Considerate Colleagues” that was developed at the request of staff as part of the return to more office-based working following the Covid pandemic.

The document attached for approval has been developed in consultation with staff (please see section 6 below) and has also been informed by best practice elsewhere, including examples identified by members of the PFCC’s Values and Behaviours Working Group. The content also reflects the PFCC’s Code of Conduct, the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service’s Code of Conduct and Essex Police’s Professionalism Strategy.

Clear and consistent standards of behaviour, which all staff are held accountable for upholding, are essential to creating a working environment where staff are inspired and enabled to do their best work. The document attached at Appendix 1 outlines the PFCC’s commitment to upholding the highest standards of ethics and integrity and seeks to support staff in doing this. If any member of staff finds themselves faced with a compliance concern or an ethical dilemma, the Code of Conduct is intended to provide them with easy-to-understand information to help guide their decisions.

5. Options Analysis

The PFCC could chose not to adopt the updated document attached at Appendix 1, however this would leave staff working to an out-of-date document based on values and behaviours which have since consciously been reviewed and replaced. Continuing to work to an outdated Staff Code of Conduct would confuse matters for staff and make it difficult for managers to hold staff to account for conducting themselves in the manner expected.

Alternatively, the PFCC could simply decommission the existing Code of Conduct and not replace it. This option is not recommended as it would leave a lack of clarity amongst staff and a lack of consistency across managers in terms of the behaviours expected, thereby similarly making adherence difficult to enforce.

6. Consultation and Engagement

The development of an updated Staff Code of Conduct which aligns with the PFCC’s current values and behaviours seeks to respond to previous feedback from staff that the adopted corporate values and behaviours still feel appropriate but that we do not always “live our values”. Feedback has previously been received that colleagues are not always clear what is expected of them, and managers are not always clear what they can reasonably expect of staff. This leads to inconsistencies across teams, which can build confusion and even resentment.

The document proposed for adoption at Appendix 1 has been developed via the PFCC’s Values and Behaviours Working Group, at its meetings in March and April 2023. Feedback obtained from the group confirmed that they found it helpful to have

a single document setting out the standards of behaviour expected, and that the document proposed for adoption covers all the areas that staff would expect it to.

Subject matter experts such as the PFCC's Data Protection Officer have also contributed content to the document.

7. Strategic Links

The proposal set out in this decision report aligns with the priority in the Police and Crime Plan to support our officers and staff.

8. Police operational implications

There are no operational implications arising from this decision report for either Essex Police or the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

9. Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising from this decision report.

10. Legal implications

The updated Code of Conduct attached for approval at Appendix 1 takes into account the requirements of the law and also what is regarded as best practice. It is consistent with the seven "Nolan Principles" of Public Life set out in section 28(1) of the Localism Act 2011. The document also sets out the expectation that all staff will comply with the Victims Code of Practice where relevant.

11. Staffing implications

All members of staff are responsible for upholding the ethics and integrity of the organisation through compliance with the Staff Code of Conduct. The standards of behaviour expected of volunteers are covered in the PFCC's Volunteer Policy but are consistent with this document.

The document does not specifically cover recruitment, as the manner in which this is to be conducted is set out in Essex Police's existing recruitment policies and processes, which the PFCC has adopted. However, again, the content is complementary.

Following approval in principle at a meeting of the PFCC's Senior Management Team on 20 June, the updated Staff Code of Conduct was socialised with colleagues at the All Staff Meeting on 26 June 2023.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implications

The document attached for approval at Appendix 1 clarifies the requirements and expectations of staff with regard to compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010.

13. Risks and Mitigations

As set out in section 5 above, there is a risk that, if an updated Staff Code of Conduct is not adopted, colleagues will be left working to an out-of-date document based on values and behaviours which have consciously been reviewed and replaced. There would be continued inconsistencies in understanding of the behaviours expected amongst staff, and managers are likely to experience difficulties in holding staff to account for conducting themselves in the manner expected.

No risks have been identified with the proposal to adopt the updated document attached at Appendix 1. However, the content will be kept under review as described in section 15 below to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

14. Governance Boards

The updated Staff Code of Conduct was discussed by the PFCC's Management Team on 20 April 2023.

The document attached for approval at Appendix 1 was approved in principle at a meeting of the PFCC's Senior Management Team (SMT) on 20 June 2023.

15. Links to Future Plans

If approved, the Staff Code of Conduct will be reviewed again in three years' time, or earlier if required by legislation, statutory guidance or best practice.

16. Background Papers and Appendices

Appendix 1 – Staff Code of Conduct

Date redaction carried out:

Chief Finance Officer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

If redaction is required, the Chief Finance Officer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign:

Print:

Chief Executive / Chief Finance Officer

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Roger Hirst

PFCC

Date signed: 19/01/2024

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: