

Aberdeenshire Council

Scottish Regulators Strategic Code of Practice

Annual Statement of Compliance December 2019

The Services of Aberdeenshire Council that are subject to the Scottish Regulators Strategic Code of Practice can confirm that they are compliant with the code of practice.

Our integrated regulatory functions work both individually and, where possible, together, to ensure appropriate regulation and the protection of our communities, always focussing on the Council principle of supporting a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy. In so doing they utilise the recommended operational approaches and adopt the principles from the Code in a variety of ways, many of which are detailed in the following paragraphs.

Environmental Health

Our Environmental Health service covers a broad area of activities and strives to provide a positive and enabling approach in all of our work, whilst tailoring our approach to the nature of this major food-production area through the expert food-related resource that we have developed. During Brexit preparations we have worked closely with the fish export business to help prepare them for possible new regulatory requirements and to enable them to continue to trade. Food hygiene inspections are conducted on a risk-based approach to allow for effective targeting of resources and focussed audits are undertaken on high risk health and safety activities. We adopt a proportionate approach to legal enforcement matters, providing advice and guidance wherever appropriate and only resorting to legal remedies when necessary. We are regularly subject to external audit by Food Standards Scotland, Audit Commission and the European Union, which helps ensure transparency, accountability and consistency in our work.

Trading Standards

The Trading Standards service aims to develop effective relationships through communication with those regulated and fostering a positive and enabling approach in all aspects of their work. Examples of this approach, illustrating how we tailor our approach and target our activities to the nature of the sector, include: provision of business advice via email, telephone or face to face appointments; provision of advisory visits and loan of weighing equipment free of charge to new businesses; attendance at Business Gateway events to provide free advice and guidance. We issue advice and information to businesses and consumers via social media platforms and the also through the Service website. Customer and business surveys are conducted by email on completion of all service requests and traders are surveyed regularly about our inspection service (86% satisfaction rate for 2018). We adopt a proportional and evidence-based approach to our work, basing our annual routine inspection plan on the national Trading Standards Board Risk Assessment Scheme and utilising national codes of practice to inform our other inspection regimes. We review our Inspection and Enforcement Policies annually to ensure proportionality and consistency and we include consideration of the requirements of the Scottish Regulators Strategic Code of Practice in this activity.

Housing and Building Standards

We adopt a positive, enabling, collaborative and outcome-focussed approach to all of our work, tailoring our approach as appropriate by, eg providing proactive advisory emails to clients, holding regular agents focus groups and offering pre-application meetings when desired. We broaden our scope to work with the private sector housing team to support wider objectives of improving the condition of private sector housing stock. We publish our Service Charter, Guidance and Enforcement Charter on our website to ensure transparency and we offer feedback on outcomes to assist with addressing areas of non-compliance. We strive to achieve the highest standards of accountability through the Customer Excellence award held since 2016, and we maintain accountability and transparency through quarterly reporting to the Scottish Government.

Waste and Environmental Protection

Our Waste Service adopts a positive, enabling approach to help contribute to sustainable economic growth through working actively with our residents and businesses to encourage and assist them to comply with relevant legislation. We provide services to enable recycling of key materials and assist through provision of Household Waste Recycling Centres, garden waste and glass recycling points, re-use facilities, special uplifts and trade waste services. We work to develop effective relationships through 2-way communication by means of promotion of national initiatives. We also promote locally-targeted fly-tipping and other prevention messages via such means as social media campaigns, and engagement initiatives with schools, local businesses and community groups, tailoring the approach for each group. We adopt a risk and evidence-based approach to our work through the use of a complaints reporting system to identify areas most important to the wider public and the Local Environmental Audit Management Scheme (LEAMS) to help identify hotspots and areas in need of attention. Our approach is to encourage and enable compliance and we resort to the use of enforcement only as a last resort where advice and guidance are ignored.

Cross working

We work across services wherever possible, an example would be Environmental Health working in conjunction with Waste Services and local area offices to address the dog fouling problem across Aberdeenshire, targeting reported hot spot areas and utilising media campaigns, signage and community engagement to inform and educate about this problem issue.

General Approach

All departments utilise benchmarking, annual reviews and reporting of performance indicators to ensure an outward focus and adopt the principles of transparency, accountability, and consistency. Our general practice is to use our website whenever possible to publish advice and guidance in an accessible and user-friendly way.