

Protocol on Member/Officer Relations

Introduction

This code is intended to offer guidance for members and officers in their dealings with one another. It is intended as a supplement to the members' and officers' codes of conduct and contribute towards the maintenance of high ethical standards across the council.

1. Mutual respect between councillors and officers is essential. The Code of Conduct for Councillors states that members should "not do anything which comprises or which is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, the authority" and they "should treat others with respect". Officers likewise should respect elected members and recognise their role and responsibilities. Members and officers should avoid any close personal familiarity that could give rise to the suspicion of bias or undue influence.
2. In accordance with Council policy, harassment or bullying in the workplace will not be tolerated ensuring fair treatment and personal dignity for all employees.
3. In general councillors make policy and officers implement the council's policy. In most cases councillors should avoid becoming involved in the operational detail of service delivery. The relationship is best defined as a partnership with Members and staff working together to achieve the overall aims of the Council.
4. Members should have regard to the Members' Job Profiles which form part of this constitution in carrying out their duties.
5. Officers must not normally lobby councillors on personal employment matters except through the agreed procedures as management or trade union representatives. Likewise officers must not lobby on budgetary matters outside of the agreed procedures.
6. Any support services provided to elected councillors are to assist them in their role as members of the council. They must be used for council business only.
7. Councillors shall be provided with the necessary information to enable them to carry out their executive, scrutiny or representative roles.
8. Any elected member of the Council may inspect and make a copy of any document in the possession or under the control of the Council and which the member may require in the course of his/her duties as a member of the Council.
9. A member may not knowingly inspect and shall not call for a copy of any document relating to a matter in which he/she is professionally interested or in which he/she has directly or indirectly any pecuniary interest
10. The Proper Officer may decline to allow inspection of any document which in his/her opinion discloses exempt information of a description falling within paragraphs 1 to 6, 9, 11, 12 and 14 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).
11. Any document provided for a member and marked "Not for Publication" shall be exclusively for the use of that member and shall not be disclosed to any other person.
12. There will be a close working relationship between a portfolio holder and the relevant senior officer. However, all officers have a duty to the whole of the council. Officers also will be expected to be able to provide advice and support to both the executive and scrutiny function remembering that they serve the council as a whole.

13. Officers are required to discharge their responsibilities without political bias or favour.
14. Members must not seek to influence the appointment of council staff other than where they are properly appointed to an appointments panel to consider a chief officer appointment in accordance with the scheme of delegation.
15. To ensure high standards of conduct members are required to abide by the Code of Conduct for Members and officers are required to abide by the Employees' Code of Conduct (when issued).
16. This protocol will be regularly reviewed by the Council's Standards Committee. (Date of last review October 2014 – next review due 2016)