

# Local Ward Member Protocol

## Community Champions

1. Local ward members, as community champions, have an important role to play in representing the Council in their wards:
  - a. Responding to the concerns of their constituents;
  - b. In meetings with partners; and
  - c. Serving on external bodies and organisations.

## Keeping Ward Members informed

2. It is essential for the proper running of the Council that members are fully informed, in a timely manner, about matters upon which they may be required to make decisions, or which affect their wards; including, but not limited to, being informed about consultation exercises, planning applications, pre-planning application meetings, and public meetings or events; except where:
  - a. An individual's right to personal confidentiality overrides this;
  - b. Any criminal investigation or police action might be prejudiced; or
  - c. Where exempt information would be compromised.
  - d. Where the member has a prejudicial interest in the matter.
3. Whilst the presumption will be in favour of information being provided to local members, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, will decide any question as to whether the above exceptions apply.
4. Subject to this, it is accepted that members need to be made aware of issues within their wards if they are to be effective in their roles as spokespersons on behalf of their local communities.

## Identifying local issues in reports

5. Reports to the Council's decision-making bodies should identify the wards affected by the issues contained in those reports. This will enable local ward members to make themselves aware of these issues and may then decide to attend the meeting in question, or to make further enquiries about the decision which is proposed to be made.

## Committing the Council to take action

6. Local ward members are reminded that they do not have the right to commit the Council or its officers to any particular course of action, and should ensure that they do not convey to the public any false impression of commitment or give any undertaking that they are not in a position to personally fulfil.

## **Casework**

It is recognised that one of the most important aspects of a Councillor's role is supporting individual residents with casework.

Members may choose to deal with casework in the way which suits them best, but the following procedures may support Members and officers in resolving issues effectively:

- Simple requests, such as instances where the resident was unable to report it themselves, may be referred to the Contact Centre or reported via the App.
- More complex requests should be emailed to the relevant officer, copying in their Director. An up to date list of Directors, their responsibilities and their contact details shall be available on the intranet. Democratic Services will also assist with identifying the right department and officer.
- Democratic Services may in connection with Council work also assist with the drafting, printing and posting of letters to residents, subject to capacity..
- Issues that have strategic or policy significance shall be brought to the attention of Directors, Executive Directors and Portfolio Holders.
- A set of 'frequently asked questions' for common casework issues, with the routes for reporting and resolving issues, shall be available on the intranet.