

DOCUMENT 3 REPRESENTATIONAL ROLE (Initial Summary)

<p>3. Representational Role: Representing Electors to the Council</p> <p>3.1 Has the representational role of Councillors changed since the council last considered how many elected members it should have?</p>	<p>The role of councilors has developed as more responsibilities have been devolved to the Council's 18 local executive area boards. Since 2009, local highways, youth services, health and wellbeing, older peoples' services, digital inclusion and Voluntary Community Sector support have been devolved. In addition, the Joint Strategic Assessment programme 'Our Community Matters' has given councilors a key role in delivering local priorities, through 'community-led' interventions.</p>
<p>3.2 In general terms, how do Councillors carry out their representational role with electors? Do members mainly respond to casework from constituents or do they have a more active role in the community?</p>	<p>Councillors take an active role in the community, carrying out the role responsively in manners such as: Websites, newsletters (online and paper), articles in local publications, visiting community events, email, facebook, notice boards, parish council attendance as well as council events like CATGs and area boards where local people are present and several devolved budgets are allocated, as well as visiting local people and organisations in person to identify community priorities and support them.</p>
<p>3.3 How Councillors engage with constituents? Do they hold surgeries, public meetings, use IT etc?</p>	<p>Councillors operate their own constituent arrangements, with some holding regular surgeries and public meetings, while others took meetings as needed on major issues, particularly in larger, rural parishes. Through membership of their local community area board they engage with the wider community – public meetings, single issue workshops, engagement events and social media, and individually they may have targeted leaflets, community events, meetings with local parishes and significant levels of casework.</p>
<p>3.4 How do councillors generally deal with casework? Do they pass on issues directly to staff or do they take a more in depth approach to resolving issues?</p>	<p>There are a range of approaches. One to one constituent casework, referral to the area board, problem solving round tables and collaboration with community groups. They can call on support from officers, forward to appropriate agencies, and usually attempt to resolve matters personally where possible, electronically and in person.</p>

<p>3.5 What support do Councillors receive in discharging their duties in relation to casework and representational role in their ward?</p>	<p>Members receive induction training, information updates, development workshops, online training, and can call upon support from council officers where appropriate, although administrative support is not available directly in relation to constituency casework, and the representational role is broadly in the hands of the individual Councillor.</p>
<p>3.6 Has the Council put in place any mechanisms for councillors to interact with young people, those not on the electoral register or minority groups or their representative bodies?</p>	<p>Each area board has a local youth network (LYN) to advise and assist local members and area boards. Members are appointed to serve on the LYN management groups and play an active role in considering issues arising. They also have collective responsibility for a devolved youth budget and work to deliver youth priorities identified through the JSA process.</p>
<p>3.7 Are Councillors expected to attend meetings of community bodies such as parish councils or resident associations? What is the level of their involvement and what role do they play?</p>	<p>Councillors usually attend local parish council meetings in their divisions, attend their local area board meetings and associated events and activities arranged by the area boards. The level of involvement and frequency of attendance varies from councillor to councillor and from parish council to parish council. They may also meet regularly with housing officers, school governing bodies, and other community groups.</p>
<p>4. The Future</p> <p>4.1 What impact do you think the localism agenda might have on the scope and conduct of council business and how do you think this might affect the role of councillors?</p>	<p>The Council has restated its commitment to devolve further powers and responsibilities to the area boards. This forms a strategic priority in the new business plan and reflects the council's desire to engage local members and local communities in decisions about matters that affect the local area. The devolution of executive powers is a unique feature of Wiltshire Council's community governance arrangements and is aimed at shifting powers and responsibilities to communities. The delegation of budgets helps to lever external resources and community assets into priority programmes. Currently, the devolved budgets lever £5 for every £1 awarded in grant by the area boards.</p>
<p>4.2 Does the council have any plans to devolve responsibilities and/or assets to community organisations? Or does the council expect to take on more responsibilities in the medium to long term?</p>	<p>As stated above, the Council continues to identify services and responsibilities for devolution to communities. In addition, the Council is working with parish councils to transfer assets and service responsibilities. The area boards have powers to divest assets up to £250k.</p>

<p>4.3 Have changes to the arrangements for local delivery of services led to significant changes to councillors' workloads? (For example, control of housing stock or sharing services with neighbouring authorities)</p>	<p>The devolution of services to the area boards has increased members' workloads. This has been welcomed by back bench members.</p>
<p>4.4 Are there any developments in policy ongoing that might significantly affect the role of elected members in the future?</p>	<p>The Council has restated its commitment to devolve further responsibilities to the 18 area boards. This will further increase the workload and executive responsibilities for local members.</p>
<p>4.5 What has been the impact of recent financial constraints on the council's activities?</p>	<p>Delegated funding has been reduced by £250k over the last two years. This currently stands at £1.3m allocated according to a funding formula that takes into account population and deprivation.</p>