

Councillor - Officer Relations

Principles

The support to be provided to councillors must be subject to the following caveats:

- Officers are employed by the council and are responsible to the council as a whole
- Officers cannot be required and must not undertake work of a political nature
- Officers must respect the confidentiality of some information that they may be exposed to

Supporting councillors centrally

The Democratic Services team ~~based in Trowbridge~~ can offer/facilitate support in the following areas:

A. ICT

ICT training will be given as part of the induction programme and following on from that equipment will be issued. This equipment will include a lap top and docking station, the option of a printer and other essentials. A broadband connection, or a monthly allowance to provide the same, will be provided together with the means to gain secure remote access to the Council's Network.

B. Councillor development

Following the councillor induction programme a detailed councillor development programme will be implemented. Councillors will be offered a personal development discussion which will enable them to discuss their training needs and find out about what training and development is available.

C. Allowances

All councillors are entitled to a basic allowance to cover the costs of being a councillor. Expenses can also be claimed for travel and subsistence. Details of allowances and expenses are set out in the Members Allowances scheme within the Constitution.

D. Secretariat and information

- Keeping councillors up-to-date with diary changes
- Booking onto any sessions from the Councillor Development Programme
- All councillors' conference arrangements including booking of places, hotel reservations, train tickets and arrangements for other transport.
- Providing 'Councillor Websites'
- Monitoring and maintaining individual Councillors' ~~declaration of~~ registered interests-forms on the council's web-site.
- Councillors' briefings with key information and details of delegated decisions, links to minutes and agenda for forthcoming meetings
- A councillor's intranet page with links to committee dates, planning applications, highways works or training opportunities.

Councillors will also be provided with:

- an identity badge
- a pass card to gain entry to the main offices ~~in the Bythesea Road~~
- ~~a council diary~~
- a general retiring lounge known as 'the members' room' (arrangements to be finalised as part of the transformation programme)
- reasonable stationery requirements, including letterheads, business cards, envelopes, and pre-paid reply envelopes for correspondence with council departments
- car parking ~~at Bythesea Road~~ whilst attending official meetings. - arrangements under review.

E. Accommodation

Each political group will have a group room and access to a docking station for a lap top, printer, telephone and photocopying facilities for use in connection with council business.

There will also be specific accommodation provided for the leader, the cabinet, scrutiny members and the chairman of the council.

F. Politicalgroupsupport

No dedicated support is provided to group leaders but photocopying can be provided in connection with group business at an agreed cost and correspondence/communications can be sent with official council communications.

G. Briefings/seminars

A detailed list of forthcoming seminars will be maintained.

H. ResponsetoCouncillorenquiries

e-mails and telephone calls

- will be acknowledged within two working days of receipt, giving details of an alternative contact if the officer concerned is absent from the office
- a substantive response will be provided within seven working days of receipt. If that is not possible an explanation will be given as to the reason for the delay, what action is being taken, and when a response will be sent.

Supporting Councillors locally

The democratic services staff based in the office hubs will, subject to resources being available, support councillors in their community leadership roles. This could include:-

- Assisting councillors in providing a two-way link between the council and the community
- Supporting the representational role of councillors
- Arranging for office facilities to be made available

Councillors will arrange any surgeries they wish to hold for their constituents, using libraries and area hub offices where appropriate.