

A Guide to Councillor Roles

May 2017



Introduction

This guide to the role of a Councillor has three main purposes:

- To provide clarity for councillors, officers, partners and the public about what is expected of each role;
- To support councillors in their development by providing a checklist to identify their development needs, both for the roles they are currently undertaking and for future roles to support succession planning;
- To provide guidance to the Independent Review Panel for the Councillors' Allowance Scheme;
- The guidance for the generic role describes for all County Councillors: The overall purpose of the role of a Councillor;
- Roles and responsibilities in relation to key aspects of a Councillors work:
 - Community Leadership and Representation.
 - Partnership working.
 - Policy Development.
 - Other.
- Core skills needed for the role;
- Principles of conduct.

The guidance also includes expectations in relation to principles of conduct and the skills needed by all Councillors.

Additional guidance is provided for Members with specific roles. These are:

- Leader;
- Deputy Leader;
- Member of Cabinet;
- Chair of Scrutiny Management Board;
- Chair of Committee (Health Scrutiny, Local Committee, Audit and Assurance, Development Control and Regulation, Pensions, Scrutiny Advisory Boards);
- Chairman;
- Vice Chairman.

A Guide to the role of a Councillor

Purpose of the Role

- To provide effective community leadership and representation for the people and area to which they are elected.
- To take part in the development of policies and services for the people of the county as a whole.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Community Leadership and Representation**
 - To represent the interest of constituents and the area in which they live by actively seeking out their views, taking these into account when considering policy and taking decisions, and feeding back to constituents the decisions that impact on them;
 - To offer vision and direction for the community and build support for that vision;
 - To undertake case work for constituents fairly and impartially and act as an advocate in resolving local concerns and grievances;
 - To act as a Corporate Parent actively seeking regular information, support and guidance in relation to children in care and safeguarding matters.
- **Partnership Working**
 - To work in partnership and build effective alliances with other local public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations and bodies;
 - To work with local organisations and interests in shaping a long-term vision for the area;
 - To develop effective working relationships with officers within the Council and externally.
- **Policy Development**
 - To contribute to the development and review of the Council's policies, strategies and plans for service delivery;
 - To participate in the scrutiny and monitoring of Council decisions, the performance of Council services and their effectiveness in meeting the priorities of the council and the needs of residents;
 - To effectively represent the Council on outside organisations to which they are appointed, reporting back to the appropriate Council body on relevant issues.
- **Other**
 - To fulfil all the legal and constitutional responsibilities required of elected members, including codes of conduct and probity issues;
 - To be accessible to constituents, partner organisations and officers of the Council using the information technology available;
 - To participate in appropriate training and development opportunities to ensure that the role of elected member is undertaken effectively.

Core Skills

- **Communication Skills:** To be able to communicate clearly in written & spoken forms, listen sensitively, use appropriate language and avoid 'council speak';
- **Local Leadership:** An ability to engage with the community, canvass opinion and act on issues of local concern. Skills also include the ability to mediate fairly and constructively between people and groups with conflicting needs, represent all sections of the community, and work with others to develop and champion a shared local vision;
- **Partnership Working:** To be able build and shape key partnerships at local, regional and national levels, as well as supporting people from all backgrounds to feel valued, trusted and included;
- **Scrutiny & Challenge:** Able to identify areas suitable for scrutiny and ensure that the community is involved in the scrutiny process. Councillors will have the skills to act as a critical friend by providing constructive feedback;
- **Political Understanding:** Able to demonstrate consistency in views and values through decisions and actions; looking for ways to promote democracy and increase public engagement. Also the ability to work effectively in range of political environments including outside the Council;
- **Regulating & Monitoring:** The ability to use evidence to evaluate arguments and make judgments. Councillors also need the ability to follow legal process and balance public needs and local policy. Monitoring of their own and others' performance and intervene when necessary to ensure progress is also a key skill.

Principles of Conduct

Councillors will all be committed to the behaviours of the Council and the following principles of public life:

- Selflessness;
- Integrity;
- Objectivity;
- Accountability;
- Openness;
- Honesty;
- Leadership.

A guide to the role of Leader

Purpose of the Role

- To act as principal spokesperson for the Council and promote the Council's vision for Cumbria and lead the Council and its partners to achieve that vision;
- To provide an overall cohesive, corporate and strategic leadership and direction for the Council
- To promote the democratic working of the Council.

Key Tasks

- To lead and chair the Cabinet and ensure its overall effectiveness;
- To work with portfolio holders to ensure effective delivery of services within their portfolios against the agreed policies of the Council, and to ensure the delivery of the Cabinets responsibilities;
- To facilitate effective communication with all those engaged in the decision making of the Council and provide feedback to all Members;
- To lead in developing the Council's partnerships with other organisations;
- To ensure that cabinet exercises responsibility for the prudent management of the Council's budget;
- To ensure effective liaison with other political groups within the Council;
- To ensure the delivery of agreed Council priorities, strategies and policies;
- To develop a constructive relationship with the Deputy Leader, Cabinet Members, Chief Executive, Corporate Directors, Assistant Directors and representatives from other organisations.

Core Skills

- Good communication and interpersonal skills;
- Leadership and chairing skills;
- Ability to influence and work constructively with Members, officers, the public and outside organisations;
- Project and time management skills, including the ability to make time available to prepare for meetings and set agendas;
- Ability to frame insightful and probing questions;
- Ability to work as part of a team.

A guide to the role of Deputy Leader

Purpose of the Role

- To assist the Leader in promoting the Council's vision for Cumbria and leading the Council and its partners to achieve that vision;
- To assist and work with the Leader of the Council in delivering overall cohesive, corporate and strategic leadership and direction for the Council;
- To promote the democratic working of the Council and deputise for the Leader of the Council where necessary.

Key Tasks

- Deputise for the Leader of the Council in their absence from Cabinet meetings;
- Carry out the requirements of their role so far as legally possible in the absence of the Leader of the Council;
- Carry out such other duties and undertake portfolio responsibility as delegated by the Leader of the Council;
- Encourage other Members to contribute to the work of the Council through their engagement in Committees and Boards;
- Develop a constructive relationships with other Cabinet Members, the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors and Assistant Directors and representatives from other organisations.

Core Skills

- Good communication and interpersonal skills;
- Leadership and chairing skills;
- Project and time management skills, including the ability to make time available to prepare for meetings and set agendas;
- Ability to influence and work constructively with Members, officers, the public and outside organisations;
- Ability to frame insightful and probing questions;
- Ability to work as part of a team.

A guide to the role of Member of Cabinet

Purpose of the Role

- To provide leadership and direction for a portfolio;
- To represent the Council on portfolio related matters;
- To be collectively accountable as part of Cabinet for all of the Council's functions which are not the responsibility of any other part of the Council, provided the decisions made are within the Council's agreed policy and budget framework.

Key Tasks

- Build good relationships with officers and work with them in developing policy and taking it forward;
- To take a proactive approach to the early engagement of overview and scrutiny committees to support effective policy development;
- Give political direction to officers working within the Portfolio;
- Ensure up to date knowledge of related developments and policies at national, regional and local level;
- Maintain an overview of performance management, efficiency and effectiveness of the portfolio;
- Consult with the Corporate Director on delegated decisions within the portfolio and others as appropriate;
- Represent the portfolio and champion the vision of the Council in meetings with stakeholders and on outside bodies, providing feedback to Cabinet on any issues of relevance and importance;
- To chair meetings in a fair and open manner in accordance with the procedures and terms of reference and guide, with the assistance of officers, Members to reach decisions based on the information presented to it and the relevant legal guidelines;
- Develop a constructive relationship with the other members of Cabinet, Corporate Directors and Assistant Directors in the areas relevant to the portfolio and representatives from other organisations.

Core Skills

- Good communication and interpersonal skills;
- Leadership and chairing skills;
- Project and time management skills, including the ability to make time available to prepare for meetings and set agendas;
- Ability to influence and work constructively with Members, officers, the public and outside organisations;
- Ability to frame insightful and probing questions;
- Ability to work as part of a team.

A guide to the role of Chair of Committee/ Board **(applies to Health Scrutiny, Internal Scrutiny Boards, Local Committees, Audit and Assurance, Development Control and Regulation)**

Purpose of the Role

- To provide leadership and direction to ensure the Committee or Board achieves its terms of reference.

Key Tasks

- To chair Committee/Board meetings in a fair and open manner in accordance with the procedures of the committee;
- Guide, with the assistance of officers, the Committee/Board to reach decisions based on the information presented to it and the relevant legal guidelines;
- Encourage Committee/Board Members to contribute to the work of the Committee;
- Lead the Committee/Board in prioritising its work;
- Develop a constructive relationship with the Cabinet, Corporate Directors and Assistant Directors and representatives from other organisations in the areas relevant to the Committee/Board's work;
- Endeavour to engage all Members of the Committee/Board in its activities;
- Be available to chair meetings;
- Find a suitable substitute and to brief them on the meeting due to be attended, on occasions when personal attendance is not possible and where substitutes are permissible.

Core Skills

- Good communication and interpersonal skills;
- Leadership and chairing skills;
- Project and time management skills, including the ability to make time available to prepare for meetings and set agendas;
- Ability to influence and work constructively with Members, officers, the public and outside organisations;
- Ability to frame insightful and probing questions;
- Ability to work as part of a team.

A guide to the role of Chair of Scrutiny Management Board

Purpose of the Role

- To provide leadership and direction to ensure the Board achieves its terms of reference;
- To provide leadership and direction for the overarching Scrutiny Work Programme relating to all Scrutiny Advisory Boards, Performance Scrutiny and Task groups;
- To provide leadership and direction for the Scrutiny input to Strategic Planning.

Key Tasks

- To chair Committee/Board meetings in a fair and open manner in accordance with the procedures of the Committee;
- To chair Call In meetings;
- Guide, with the assistance of officers, the Committee/Board to reach decisions based on the information presented to it and the relevant legal guidelines;
- Encourage Committee/Board Members to contribute to the work of the Committee;
- Lead the Committee/Board in prioritising its work;
- Develop a constructive relationship with the Cabinet, Corporate Directors and Assistant Directors and representatives from other organisations in the areas relevant to the Committee/Board's work;
- Endeavour to engage all Members of the Committee/Board in its activities;
- Be available to chair meetings;
- Find a suitable substitute and to brief them on the meeting due to be attended, on occasions when personal attendance is not possible and where substitutes are permissible.

Core Skills

- Good communication and interpersonal skills;
- Leadership and chairing skills;
- Project and time management skills, including the ability to make time available to prepare for meetings and set agendas;
- Ability to influence and work constructively with Members, officers, the public and outside organisations;
- Ability to frame insightful and probing questions;
- Ability to work as part of a team.

A guide to the role of Chairman

Purpose of the Role

- To preside over meetings of the Council, ensuring that Council meetings run smoothly, that all business is properly considered and all councillors who wish to speak can do so;
- Acting as an ambassador for the County Council and champion for Cumbria.

Key Tasks

- To chair Council meetings in a fair and open manner in accordance with the procedures of the Council;
- Guide, with the assistance of officers, Council to reach decisions based on the information presented to it and the relevant legal guidelines;
- Develop a constructive relationship with the Group Leaders, Cabinet, Corporate Directors and Chief Executive;
- Be available to represent the Council at civic and ceremonial events as well as participate in promotional and public relations activity on behalf of the Council;
- Host events and functions on behalf of the County Council;
- Find a suitable substitute and to brief them on the meeting due to be attended, on occasions when personal attendance is not possible and where substitutes are permissible.

Core Skills

- Good communication and interpersonal skills;
- Leadership and chairing skills;
- Time management skills, including the ability to make time available to prepare for meetings and set agendas;
- Ability to influence and work constructively with Members, officers, the public and outside organisations;
- Ability to work as part of a team.

A guide to the role of Vice Chairman

Purpose of the Role

- To assist the Chairman in their duties;
- To deputise for the Chairman where required.

Key Tasks

- Develop a constructive relationship with the Group Leaders, Cabinet, Corporate Directors and Chief Executive;
- Be available to deputise for the Chairman.

Core Skills

- Good communication and interpersonal skills;
- Leadership and chairing skills;
- Time management skills, including ability to make time available to prepare for meetings and set agendas;
- Ability to influence and work constructively with Members, officers, the public and outside organisations;
- Ability to work as part of a team.

