

Appendix 1

Aide memoire for Members and Officers for dealing with each other

Purpose: to help Members and Officers to work together in a professional manner.

Principles:

The following general principles all come from Codes of Conduct, the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations or other documents in the Council's Constitution. By providing them here, it is hoped that both Members and Officers will have their memories refreshed.

Mutual respect is required by both the Members and Officers Codes of Conduct for each other. This includes respect for the different but complementary roles of Members and Officers.
Neither should undermine respect for the other in public meetings, the media including social media or at any other time when dealing with Council business.
Both Members and Officers are very busy and time is at a premium for both. Each should respect the time constraints for the other when dealing together.
Individual Members cannot and should not seek to give instructions on individual matters.
Cabinet Members can provide a view on the Political direction and likely acceptance or otherwise of an issue or direction of a project.
The Council has an approved Member/Officer Relations Protocol which should be applied at all times. This contains legal rules as well as rules made by the Council and as the title suggests, is for both Members and Officers.
This Protocol (at paragraph 6.1) reinforces that Members should not generally be approaching junior Members of staff with their enquiries. Junior officers may well not have the information or details required to answer the request, but may also feel intimidated into trying to respond and therefore give an inaccurate or plain wrong answer. This is not fair to junior officers.
This is particularly relevant to Cabinet Members who, by the nature of their role will be much more involved in the Council's business than other Members. Details should be sought from senior officers - usually the Directors and Assistant Directors.

Members should not ask officers to breach Council procedures or policy when dealing with an issue. For example by sending personal sensitive data about a constituent to a private email address.

Cabinet Members must listen to what they are being told by officers to get the full picture on a matter

Equally, Officers should listen carefully to Members to understand what is wanted by the Member.

The Council often employs consultants. The same rules apply in relation to how consultants are dealt with. However it should be remembered that consultants work for the Directors and Assistant Directors and do not take instruction from Members.

If a Member has a problem concerning a Member of Staff, the Cllr should discuss with the line manager or the AD or the Director or where the officer is senior or it is a very serious case, the Head of Paid Service.

If an Officer has a problem with a Councillor, they should raise this with the line manager or AD. Advice on this can be obtained from the Monitoring Officer and Head of Paid Service in more serious cases.

Sarah Sternberg
Monitoring Officer

March 2022