

THE ROLE OF A COUNCILLOR

A GENERIC ROLE PROFILE (DRAFT)

The role of a Councillor can be a rewarding form of public service that puts people in a position where they are able to make a difference to the quality of life and well being of the people within their community. Councillors have to be able to balance the needs and interests of residents, voters, political parties and the council whilst acting fairly and within the law. It is important that councillors understand their very diverse role so that they can perform it effectively and responsibly.

The Generic Role Profile identifies the role and responsibilities as well as the skills and knowledge required for this role, which is the foundation for all other roles undertaken by elected members. The responsibilities, skills and knowledge assist in the identification of the requirements of a Member Development Programme.

The role profile:

- provides clarity for Councillors about what is expected of the role
- supports Councillors in their own development by providing a checklist against which they can assess their knowledge and skills and identify their development needs. (The further development of Role Profiles for specialist roles would also assist them in identifying development needs for future roles and also assist in succession planning.)

GENERIC ROLE PROFILE

Key activities and responsibilities

Councillors are the bridge between a community and its council. The councillor's job is to be the community's advocate and to build relationships with individuals and groups to inform, consult and empower people and community groups effectively facilitating community involvement in local government and the decision making process.

As a Ward Councillor you will have responsibility for:

- Developing a collective vision for the whole district
- Together with other Councillors, developing policy about the services to be provided to meet the needs of the community and being an advocate of those policies within your community.
- Championing the interests of your local community and effectively representing the interests of your Ward and its constituents in the Council's decision making process.
- Supporting and promoting citizenship locally and empowering the community to participate in the governance of the area.
- Carrying out a scrutiny role to ensure effective and efficient service delivery
- Undertaking casework and act as an advocate for constituents in resolving concerns or grievances.

- Working in partnership with Parish Councils and other local organisations to identify and pursue local needs and aspirations and encouraging community action.
- Representing the council on outside bodies as required and participating effectively in the appointed role.

Skills Required

Leadership

The ability to lead and champion the interests of the local community

Chairing

The ability to chair meetings and facilitate discussions

Organisational Skills

- Manage casework
- Use IT to support the management of Casework, communicate through council systems e.g. e.mail.
- Basic Administration Skills
- Time management skills

Team Working & Building Relationships

- The ability to develop effective relationships with key officers and partner agencies.
- The ability to build effective relationships with all sections of the community so as to be able to represent their needs to the Council.

Communication

- The ability to deal with the media whilst being able to identify when additional support from public relations specialists is required, to ensure the Council is positively represented
- The ability to deal with issues raised by a range of audiences including constituents, by correspondence, telephone, email and in person
- The ability to use IT to communicate using internal systems, e.g. e mail, intranet etc.
- Active listening and questioning skills
- Presentation skills
- Public speaking

Community Leadership

- The ability to engage proactively with the community, canvass opinion and seek new ways of representing others
- The ability to help communities and their organisations to contribute to effective decision-making on issues that effect them
- Encouraging people from all sections of the community to play their part in local democracy and active citizenship
- Keeps up to date with community issues of local concern, drawing information and resources from a range of sources and people
- Is able to develop partnerships inside the council and with external organisations
- Is able to mediate constructively and fairly between people / groups with conflicting needs

Other Skills

- Finance and budgeting skills – interpretation of budgets and accounts
- Influencing and persuading skills
- Negotiation skills
- Managing sensitive / conflict situations and mediation skills

Knowledge Required

- Knowledge of the political decision making structures
- Knowledge of the strategic priorities and key policies for the Council
- Knowledge of key contact officers within service areas
- Knowledge of the diversity of communities
- Knowledge of the voluntary and community sectors
- Knowledge of community consultation and participation
- Understanding of the Code of Conduct for Councillors, ethics and standards and the role of the Standards Committee and the Standards Board for England.
- Understanding of national policies and their impact on the Council
- A basic understanding of local government finance and audit processes
- Knowledge and understanding of legislation and Council policies to which Members must adhere – Freedom of Information, Data Protection, Equality & Diversity legislation, Smoking Policy etc.
- Where appropriate, for those Members who sit on quasi –judicial panels, knowledge of legislation and policy relating to planning, licensing and appeals is required together with an understanding of the principles and importance of making rational decisions.