

Watford Borough Council

Ward Councillor Role Profile

Overview

- To represent the day to day interests of all constituents and to ensure that the interests of the local community are properly represented in the Council and constituents' enquiries and representations are dealt with in an efficient and timely manner .
- To contribute actively to the formation and scrutiny of the Authority's policies, budget, strategies and service delivery.
- To champion the causes which best relate to the interests and sustainability of the community and campaign for the improvement of the quality of life of the community.

Key Responsibilities

Community Leadership

- Engage proactively with the community in order to learn, understand and act upon issues of local concern.
- Mediate fairly and constructively, encouraging trust by representing all sections of the community.
- Represent and/or support constituents, community and business views at meetings of Council and its Committees and take steps to get those views heard by decision makers within the Council.
- Keep up to date with the community on issues of local concern including attending meetings of key stakeholders such as Tenants and Residents Associations where appropriate
- Create opportunities for interactive communications with constituents through a range of processes, including arranging local meetings and surgeries.
- Work with fellow ward councillors to explore ways of using the Neighbourhood Forum budget to the maximum benefit of local residents.
- Work with local communities to ensure equal access to the Council's decision-making process and those of other bodies
- Communicate with Members of Parliament or European Parliament on behalf of constituents.

Regulating & Monitoring

- Participate effectively at Council and Committee meetings in accordance with the Procedure Rules laid down in the Council's Constitution.
- Develop and maintain a working knowledge of the organisations, services, activities and other factors which impact upon the community's well-being and identity.

Scrutiny & Challenge

- Participate in the scrutiny performance review of the services of the Authority including the scrutiny of policies and budget and their effectiveness in achieving corporate priorities

- Challenge processes, people and decisions in an objective, rigorous manner.
- Review the decisions of Cabinet, including the use of call in procedures as necessary and make recommendations for further action or amendments.

Communication Skills

- Communicate regularly with the community via newsletters, phone calls and the local media.
- Provide regular feedback to constituents on issues they have raised.
- Speak clearly and confidently in public using accessible language and avoiding jargon

Working in Partnership

- Assist in the implementation of processes to identify and tackle, in partnership with the Council and other organisations, issues which affect the community.
- Represent the Council as the appointed representative on outside bodies and provide a two-way communication between them and the Council
- Develop and maintain a working knowledge of the authority's management arrangements for services, powers / duties, and constraints, and develop good working relationships with relevant officers of the authority
- Participate in the area and service-based consultative processes with the community and other organisations.

Political Understanding

- Take up relevant opportunities for member training and development to help improve role as an effective and influential councillor, especially those relating to statutory requirements.
- Adhere to the Members' Code of Conduct and the Council's Constitution
- Represent Group's views and values through decisions and actions
- Help develop cohesion within the Group and contribute to healthy communication between the Group and the Council.
- Work across Group boundaries without compromising political values.
- Act as the public face of the Council and a role model for others.
- Encourage co-operation and communication across political and council boundaries.

Key Skills

- A good understanding of the operation of the Council and an understanding of Local Government generally including the statutory regulations/procedures and financial frameworks within which it works.
- The ability to communicate effectively with all sections of the community (both friendly and hostile).
- Ability to read and assimilate Council documents
- Ability to troubleshoot and juggle conflicting responsibilities
- Ability to listen effectively to different and sometimes conflicting views within the local community and to take these views on board when representing local interest within the Council and outside.
- Basic IT skills

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Role Profile for Chairs of Scrutiny

Overview

- To Chair Scrutiny Committee meetings comprising elected members from all political groups.
- To ensure that the committee takes an independent leadership role and acts as a critical friend in the Council's efforts to continuously improve the performance of its services and functions and the policies and strategies within which they operate.

Duties and Responsibilities

General

- To chair the committee efficiently in an impartial, non-partisan manner and be responsible for ensuring that it fulfils its purpose and terms of reference.
- To agree a programme of meetings for the committee in consultation with the Committee & Scrutiny Officer
- To ensure that the committee carries out its functions properly and effectively, complying with statutory regulations/procedures and the procedures within the Council's Constitution.
- To consult with officers on items for inclusion in the agenda and to consider and comment on draft minutes within the timescales specified.
- To attend briefing meetings with officers as required
- To work closely with the Committee & Scrutiny Officer to agree a rolling scrutiny work programme.
- To attend Cabinet meetings as required to present and answer questions on scrutiny related reports
- To undertake training as required to develop a knowledge of the functions covered by the committee and to improve chairing skills

Overview & Scrutiny (in addition to the above)

- To lead the committee in establishing Task Groups, agreeing the scope of the review, setting terms of reference and agreeing the membership.
- To lead the committee in following up progress on the recommendations of previous reviews.
- To lead the committee on checking the progress of current task groups and testing the soundness of their recommendations.
- To attend meetings of the Joint Cabinet/Scrutiny Committee to report on scrutiny progress and to consult with the Executive on future issues for review.
- To lead the committee in the regular review of the Notice of Executive Decisions.
- To be responsible for ensuring that the Annual Scrutiny Report is presented to Council as required within the council's Constitution.

- To agree the inclusion of urgent reports to Cabinet in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules on Special Urgency.
- **(Vice Chair)** to chair meetings dealing with the call-in of Executive decisions in accordance with the Procedure Rules laid down in the Council's Constitution.

Budget Panel (in addition to the general duties listed above)

- To facilitate the review of fees and charges, the draft budget and the final budget proposals and to attend Cabinet to submit the Panel's recommendations.
- To facilitate the review of the quarterly budget monitor, the Medium Term Financial Plan and the Asset Management and Capital Strategy.
- To lead the Panel in undertaking value for money studies of selected services.
- To regularly provide an update to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Panel.

Key Skills

- The ability to chair meetings to facilitate open discussion, to work in a cross party environment and to ensure that the business on the agenda is dealt with properly.
- A good understanding of the operation of the Council and an understanding of Local Government generally including the statutory and financial frameworks within which it works.
- To have a clear understanding of the Council's key partners
- Effective leadership skills including decision making and challenging.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, with the ability to communicate effectively with all sections of the community
- Ability to deal courteously with the public and to maintain impartiality.
- Ability to present scrutiny reports and answer questions at Cabinet and Council in a clear and informative manner.

Budget Panel (in addition to the above)

- An in depth knowledge and understanding of the Council's budget and Local Government Finance.

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Role Profile for Chairs of non scrutiny committees

Overview

- To lead the work of the Committee and ensure that it carries out its functions effectively and within its terms of reference.

Duties and Responsibilities

- To demonstrate a good knowledge of the functions within the remit of the committee.
- To chair the committee efficiently and be responsible for ensuring that it fulfils its purpose and terms of reference.
- To chair the meetings impartially and in such a way as to facilitate open discussion from Members on both sides of the Council.
- To be responsible for the efficient transaction of business at meetings and ensuring that all recommendations contained in the report have been considered.
- To ensure that the committee carries out its functions properly and effectively, complying with statutory regulations/procedures and the procedures within the Council's Constitution.
- To present recommendations to full Council on behalf of their committee as required.
- To consult with officers on items for inclusion in the agenda and to consider and comment on draft minutes within the timescales specified.
- To attend briefing meetings with officers as required.
- To represent the Council at meetings outside the authority which fall within the terms of reference of the committee.
- In conjunction with Council officers, to regularly monitor and review the work of the committee to ensure that its objectives are being met.
- To undertake training as required to develop a knowledge of the functions covered by the committee and to improve chairing skills.

Key Skills

- The ability to chair meetings, to facilitate open discussion, to work in a cross party environment and to ensure that the business on the agenda is dealt with properly.
- A good understanding of the operation of the Council and an understanding of Local Government generally including the statutory and financial frameworks within which it works.
- Effective leadership skills including decision making and challenging.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, with the ability to communicate effectively with all sections of the community
- Ability to deal courteously with the public and to maintain impartiality.

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Portfolio Holder Role Profile

Overview

To provide political guidance to the relevant Head of Service on the development and implementation of the Council's priorities and objectives in relation to the service area or area of responsibility liaising as necessary with the Mayor and other Members of the Cabinet to ensure a co-ordinated and coherent approach is taken to the formulation of plans and priorities and the delivery of services.

Key Responsibilities

Local Leadership

- Promoting Council initiatives and services to the whole community
- Promoting Council priorities to champion a shared local vision
- Consulting with relevant sections of the community or as a whole on new policies, initiatives and developments.

Regulating and monitoring

- Being aware of the legal process and ensuring decisions are made in accordance with the Council's Constitution
- Participating in matters requiring collective Cabinet consideration and which have implications across the Council as a whole, such as –
 - major policy matters affecting the Council.
 - prospective decisions with significant service implications including resource or performance implications
 - matters requiring collective political guidance
 - proposals or responses to recommendations raised by a scrutiny panel
 - recommending a budget to Council
- Working with Cabinet members and officers to monitor services, including those outsourced, and procurement related to the designated portfolio.
- Guiding relevant policy development or proposals through the Council and ensuring that Cabinet is informed of all relevant issues, matters, activities, proposals or events relating to that service area.
- Monitoring performance of activities and service areas within Portfolio area, using service plans and performance indicators, holding regular informal meetings with service heads and formal 'quarterly review' meetings.
- Participating in relevant training opportunities and attending conferences/seminars in specialist areas when appropriate

Scrutiny and challenge

- Attending scrutiny committees when invited to explain decisions taken by him/herself or by Cabinet collectively and to explain proposals for new policies.
- Giving all assistance required by the committee and supporting the scrutiny process by ensuring any recommendations are fully considered.

Communication

- Acting as a spokesperson within and outside the authority for services/functions within the portfolio
- Speaking confidently in public settings e.g. Council and community meetings and the media

Working in partnership

- Undertaking such consultation as necessary in order to make informed decisions, including taking advice from officers on matters affecting the function concerned, prior to action being taken.
- Consulting other councillors when appropriate on developments or policies which will affect their residents
- Representing the Council whenever necessary on national, regional and other outside bodies and at conferences.
- Working towards maintaining positive relationships with partners and working proactively with key partners in the Town to achieve shared goals
- Working with officers to formulate policy and being aware of how policy impacts on services
- Representing the Council and Cabinet (or making recommendations on their behalf) to other bodies on matters that relate to the Member's area of responsibility.

Political understanding

- Working as a team with other Portfolio Holders and the Elected Mayor to decide the direction and priorities of the Council.
- Keeping abreast of relevant legislation, national and local policy.

Providing vision

- Creating and developing Council policy to deliver excellent services for residents

Managing Performance

- Taking responsibility for and being held accountable for any decisions taken by Cabinet
- Holding quarterly review sessions with Heads of Service to monitor progress

Key Skills

- Knowledge/understanding of legislation, National and Local Policy, local government finance and funding sources available

- An understanding of the complexities of the service within the individual portfolio and detailed up to date knowledge of the portfolio holder area
- An understanding of how the Council operates
- Ability to quickly grasp complex issues and find creative solutions
- Ability to plan and think strategically and corporately.
- Ability to work collaboratively with senior staff
- Ability to work effectively within a team environment.
- Effective leadership skills including decision making and challenging.

- Excellent communication skills including
 - with the media
 - with the public
 - at public meetings e.g., Cabinet and Council
 - with officers
 - with partners of the Council
 - with other individuals and groups
 - representing the Council

- Excellent Organisational skills including
 - Managing a heavy workload
 - Working to tight timescales
 - Following Council procedure as set out in the Constitution