

### **Proposed Member/Officer Protocol**

1.1 From the discussions with members the key points of agreement are:

2.2 That the member's role is to set policy and govern the council, review performance, represent the Council and fulfil their ward based roles.

1.3 That the officers' role is to implement member decisions made at committee, deliver council services professionally and in accordance with statute and to provide professional unbiased advice for members.

1.4 Members and officers should always be supportive of each other and treat each other with mutual courtesy and respect and act accordingly at all times.

1.5 It is not in the role of, or expected of members, that they be involved in the day to day operation of council services or day to day staffing issues.

#### **1.6 *That this opportunity is taken to reiterate the following working protocols:***

- Members and officers should always talk.
- All members are welcome at the Council Offices, Brocks Hill and Depot at anytime. Members must simply sign in as this is a security and health & safety requirement.
- The first point of contact for members should be a member of Management Team, a Head of Service or a member of the Chief Executive's Central Office Support, as above. If appropriate these officers will then identify and agree with that member if there is another specific officer who is better placed to deal with that member's issue and the officer will organise that.
- The Members' Room will be kept as a dedicated space for members to be able to meet with officers. This will also ensure a confidential setting which will be free from interruptions.
- Protecting members from exposure to data protection and confidentiality requirements means that members should ideally not visit offices within the buildings unarranged.
- Members should not involve themselves in operational issues or by trying to give instructions or influence officers. To do this will cause potential problems for the member (open to possible accusations of manipulating Council procedures to further personal or political interests) and officers (causes confusion, undermines the management structure and compromises Council processes).
- Officers need to be more aware and sensitive of the issues that may affect councillors and their residents and therefore communicate with members earlier and more pro actively.
- The specific relationship that will need to be forged between a Chair and the appropriate link officer is covered under the Governance Section of this paper.

1.7 That on this basis the Constitutional Task Group be requested to review the Member and Officer Protocols as set out in the Council's Constitution and as attached.

***At its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 the Constitutional Task Group agreed the following basic principles which it recommends to Council.***

### **Members**

- Govern the Council
- Make decisions on behalf of the whole borough
- Set Council Policy
- Review service performance
- Represent the Council
- Fulfil ward based role
- Respect the political neutrality of officers

### **Officers**

- Implement Committee decisions
- Deliver Council services professionally
- Provide unbiased, politically neutral, fact based advice to members
- Pro actively communicate and share information with members
- Be sensitive to the politics of members but not to be influenced by it

It is not the role or expected of members that they would be involved with, or that they would try to influence, any day to day operation of council services or staffing issues (with the exception of the formal Appeals Panel process)

### **Behaviour Expected from Members and Officers**

- Mutually supportive
- Polite
- Courteous and considerate
- Not over familiar or too close on a personal level
- Trusting and respectful

In addition it is proposed that the following is added:

Officers should respect the right of members to make decisions that may be contrary to officer advice. Similarly members should respect the professional advice of officers even if they are minded to make a decision which is contrary to that advice.