



Section E

Roles, duties and responsibilities of Councillors

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1.0 Summary

- 1.1 To serve your constituents and the people of Eastbourne by acting as an effective advocate, campaigner and representative.
- 1.2 To promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of your constituents and the residents and visitors of the Borough as a whole, and to act in accordance with the high standards of probity in public life, seeking to serve the community without personal gain.

2.0 Being effective

- 2.1 To be effective:-

You must fully understand and act in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct and the General Principles that govern Members' conduct.

You need to have a knowledge and understanding of the Council's Constitution.

You need to know the Council's organisation and management structure and who to ask for information and advice.

You should attend all meetings of bodies on which you serve together with seminars and training sessions on subjects of relevance to you and your particular areas of involvement and interest.

You should accept personal responsibility to take up opportunities for training and development that may be provided and generally to extend and broaden your knowledge of local government affairs through reading, discussion and enquiry.

3.0 Different roles for some councillors

3.1 Some Councillors will undertake markedly different roles (e.g. the Mayor, the Leader, Cabinet Member, Opposition Leader, Committee Chairman, etc.). The special role of the Mayor, Leader and the Cabinet Members are covered in separate statements. The status of Opposition Spokespersons, Committee Chairmen, etc., and their rights to information and briefings is set down in the Council's Rules of Procedure.

4.0 Standards of conduct and probity

4.1 Your attention is drawn to the Codes and Protocols in Part 5 of this Constitution. All Councillors must agree to abide by these and you will be given a copy on taking Office.

4.2 Councillors must also abide by all the requirements of the Council's own Constitutional arrangements. Any breach of these Codes and Protocols may be a matter for the Council's Standards Panel and you should note the procedures for dealing with complaints.

4.3 You are expected to behave at all times in accordance with the high standards of personal conduct and in a manner that is consistent with the principles as appended to achieve best value for residents and maintain public confidence in the Borough Council.

5.0 Working as part of the council

5.1 At meetings of the Council and as a Member of one or more of the different Council bodies, including the Cabinet, Committees and Task Groups, you will be expected to contribute to the formulation and review of policies and strategies and the review and development of services and programmes as appropriate.

5.2 You should be constructive and forward looking. An innovative and questioning approach is required.

- 5.3 The work of the Council is conducted in a political environment. As a Councillor, elected with the endorsement and backing of a political party and as a Member of a political group, you will naturally wish to secure aims and objectives that match your political affiliation. A political approach is legitimate, however, you should guard against pursuing political objectives to the point that it impedes the effective management of the Council's affairs and undermines peoples' confidence in the Council's ability to exercise a leadership role in the wider community.
- 5.4 You should have regard to the Corporate Plan and other Council policies and strategies, especially when considering the quality and scope of services and weighing the merits of competing interests and demands upon the Council Budget.
- 5.5 When participating in the Scrutiny function you should have regard to the Council's Scrutiny Rules of Procedure and in particular the requirement to take an independent approach, seek consensus on outcomes, be constructive and not judgmental.

6.0 Community representative and advocate

- 6.1 Be aware of the needs, priorities and aspirations of your local community. To do this, you should make yourself known to those who live and work in your Ward (your constituents). You may wish to hold regular surgeries, publish newsletters or otherwise make yourself accessible. Liaise/consult extensively and meet with local groups and organisations.
- 6.2 Represent the views of your constituents and local groups. Take careful note of the different, often conflicting, interests, and attempt to represent the community as a whole. Act as an advisor or advocate to local groups with a special interest, or generally provide advice and assistance on matters within your Ward and the implications of particular courses of action.
- 6.3 Such a representational role must be undertaken responsibly. As a politician you will naturally want to have regard to the views of voters and avoid, or at least minimise criticism by political opponents. You do, however, have a wider responsibility to protect the Council's interests and reputation and help reach the best decision. You must remember that you are not simply a delegate of the local community.
- 6.4 Encourage constituents to raise matters of importance or personal concern and take appropriate action. Either respond yourself or ensure a response is provided. Where necessary seek advice on any response made as you may be seen to be acting on behalf of the Council as a whole.

7.0 Working with others in the local community

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Part 3 - Responsibility for Functions

- 7.1 As a Councillor you will be expected to work with partners and other organisations with which the Council is actively involved.
- 7.2 As a Council appointed representative on such bodies you will have a responsibility to explain the Council's policies and position where appropriate and to listen to the views of others and report back to the Council.
- 7.3 Make a point of explaining to others outside the Council with whom you have dealings, how the decision making process operates and the level of authority that Councillors and Officers have. No individual Councillor may presently take decisions formally. Make clear and otherwise seek to avoid giving rise to any misapprehension about your ability to commit the Council to any particular course of action or expenditure.
- 7.4 You may also be involved in other local organisations, especially those in the voluntary sector, and although such involvement may pre-date your election as a Councillor, you should recognise that as an elected Councillor others may regard statements you make as having Council backing. Always make it clear when you are speaking in an individual capacity, otherwise others may believe you are speaking for the Council as a whole.

8.0 Promoting the council's interests

- 8.1 You should promote the Council's corporate aims and objectives and the Council's standing as a body locally and further a field (regionally, nationally and internationally).
- 8.2 If appointed or elected to serve on such bodies as the Local Government Association or other representative bodies covering particular areas of interest or location, you should seek to contribute to and influence the work of that body, to explain the Council's position, and where this does not unduly conflict with any wider representation role you may have in that body, to promote the Council's interest. You should ensure that you report back to the Council on matters of importance to the Council and where necessary seek to promote mutual understanding between the Council and the body on which you also serve.
- 8.3 You should seek to foster a sense of civic pride within the community and encourage all citizens to develop and maintain a personal commitment to civic responsibility. You should avoid statements and actions that serve to undermine confidence in the institutions of local government without justification or good cause.

9.0 Accountability

- 9.1 The roles, duties and responsibilities outlined in this statement relate to the political or Member level activities of the Borough Council. Accountability for a Councillor's performance is through the political and electoral process.

The Seven Principles of Public Life

Selflessness

1. Members should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

Integrity

2. Members should not place themselves in situations where integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour. Members should show integrity by consistently treating other people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or position, for example as an officer or employee of the authority.

Objectivity

3. Members should make decisions in accordance with the law and on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.

Accountability

4. Members should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities, and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.

Openness

5. Members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority, and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.

Honesty

6. Members should not place themselves in situations where their honesty may be questioned, should not behave dishonestly and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour. Members should declare any private interests relating to their public duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

7. Members should promote and support these principles by leadership, and by example, and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.