

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Councillor role descriptions

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Role of City Councillor

As the local councillor, your residents will expect you to:

- respond to their queries and investigate their concerns (known as casework)
- share information on council decisions that affect them
- know your patch – and be aware of problems
- know and work with representatives of local organisations, interest groups and businesses
- represent their views at council meetings
- lead local campaigns on their behalf

As a member of the Council you will:

- Participate constructively in the good governance of the City
- Represent the Council effectively
- Act at all times with probity and propriety in the best interest of the Council and observe the **Councillor Code of Conduct**

Depending on the position held you could also:

- Develop policy
- Make decisions
- Contribute to the formation and scrutiny of the authority's policies, budget, strategies and service delivery
- Make decisions on planning and licensing applications

Duties and Responsibilities

To fulfil the statutory and locally determined requirements of an elected member, including compliance with all relevant codes of conduct, and participation in those decisions and activities reserved to the full Council

To attend full Council and participate effectively as a member of any Committee, Working Party, Forum or Panel to which the Councillor is appointed

To participate in the activities of any outside body to which the Councillor is appointed, providing two-way communication between the organisations. Also, for this purpose, to develop and maintain a working knowledge of the authority's policies and practices in relation to that body and of the community's needs and aspirations in respect of that body's role and functions

To participate in the scrutiny and performance of the services of the authority

To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the authority's services, management arrangements, powers/duties, and constraints, and to develop good working relationships with relevant officers of the authority

To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the other organisations and services which serve the City

To contribute constructively to open government and democratic renewal through active encouragement to the community to participate generally in the democratic process

Be responsible for continuous personal development. Take advantage of learning opportunities to build on understanding and knowledge and to develop relevant skills

Desirable Skills

A good communicator

Ability to relate and deal with people in a professional and timely manner

Ability to work effectively within the Council ie. with other councillors and officers

Role of Mayor

The mayor is always a serving Councillor, elected by the full Council at its Annual Meeting, and stands for one year in office.

Focus of the role

- Acting as ‘first citizen’ of the City of Cambridge at ceremonial and social events.
- To enhance the image of the Council by ensuring the dignity of the office and promoting the accessibility of the office to the public.
- To chair meetings of the Council.
- To actively participate in the Council’s initiatives, promoting the council area, supporting its values, aims and vision.

Duties

Ceremonial

To undertake the following ceremonial occasions (on all these occasions the robe and the chain of office is worn and the Great Mace is carried by the Sergeant-at-Mace ahead of the Mayor):

- 4 civic church services
- 1 Annual Meeting of the Council, usually in May
- 2 Proclamations of Fairs (Midsummer and Reach)
- The Mayor’s Reception
- The Queenborough Feast
- The Carol Service for Secondary School Pupils at King’s College Chapel (where the Mayor will be invited to read a lesson)
- Christmas Eve Carol Service at King’s College Chapel (where the Mayor will be invited to read a lesson)

Attendance at Meetings

- To chair effectively and without political bias (except when speaking or exercising a vote) meetings of the Council (5 per year) to achieve the

efficient and timely despatch of the business of the meeting.

- To be a member of one or more of the Council's committees (this is optional). The Mayor is an ex-officio member of the Civic Affairs Committee.
- To hold membership of a number of outside organisations and to attend when possible meetings and/or events of those organisations.

Social

- To host events and receptions held at the Guildhall.
- To receive and entertain visitors to the Mayor's Parlour.
- To represent the City at events to which the Mayor will receive an invitation.
- To receive to the City members of the Royal Family and other special guests
- To give speeches (composed if necessary with the support of the Civic Office).
- To support up to two local charities during the year by heading two major fund raising events organised by the Civic Office.
- To support the Council's twinning links with Heidelberg, Germany and Szeged, Hungary, by attending events and participating in activities when invited to do so.

Administrative and operational

- To appoint a Mayor's Chaplain to accompany the Mayor on certain occasions in the civic year (*this is optional*).
- To respond to the invitations received to enable the Civic Office to issue replies in accordance with service standards of seven working days.
- To be mindful of the Council's Vision Statement, to undertake engagements in support of this, and to promote the role of Mayor to reach

the full diversity of communities in Cambridge.

- To build a working relationship with the media with a view to ensuring that the Council and the mayoralty receives a high profile.
- To work with the Mayor's Executive Assistant on ensuring that staff dedicated to supporting the Mayoralty are managed within the terms of contracted/annualised hours.
- To be personally responsible for all decisions connected with the acceptance or offer of gifts or hospitality and for avoiding the risk of damage to public confidence in local government.
- To abide by the rules of protocol when wearing the mayoral insignia.
- To be accountable for the Mayor's allowance and to retain copies of all invoices relating to expenditure.
- To ensure that there is a good working relationship with the Deputy Mayor and the Baillifs.
- To liaise with the County Council Chairman and adjacent Council civic leaders as appropriate.

Note

The above duties and responsibilities are in addition to the Member's role as a Councillor

Role of Leader of the Council

To provide political leadership and strategic direction for the Council

To exercise functions on behalf of the Executive as set out in the Council's Executive Procedure Rules

Duties and Responsibilities

To provide the political leadership to the Council, including proposing the corporate policy framework within which the Council will operate

To lead and work with the Council's Senior Leadership Team of officers

To appoint a designated Deputy Leader

Be responsible for appointing and removing Executive members, for allocating portfolios and areas of responsibility and for allocating decision making powers

To be part of the representative voice of the Council, for example, in its dealings with external partnerships, Central Government, other Local Authorities and their Associations.

Note

The above duties and responsibilities are in addition to the Member's role as Councillor and as an Executive Councillor

Role of Executive Councillor

The Executive is responsible for implementing Council policies and priorities and for delivering a wide range of services.

To take responsibility for the portfolio allocated.

To exercise delegated powers in accordance with the Council's Constitution

Effectively contribute, with all other Executive Councillors, towards the strategic direction of the Council.

Duties and Responsibilities

To shape and develop the strategic priorities and vision of the Council, participating in debates and discussion about policy issues across the range of services provided by the Council

Act as the Lead Member for a particular portfolio as may be determined by the Leader of the Council, but in doing so, have regard to the overall corporate policy objectives. Champion the portfolio concerned within that strategic context

In connection with the portfolio itself:

Build good relationships with appropriate senior officers and work with them in developing policy or strategic issues prior to formal reporting.

Keep abreast of related developments and policies at national, regional and local level

Enhance the Council's reputation where possible and participating in regional and national networks.

Aim for Cambridge City Council to be at the forefront of service development and provision where possible; take an active interest in related performance indicators and exemplars of good practice (if appropriate)

Represent the Executive at the Scrutiny Committee in connection with any decisions.

Be aware of issues of importance to the community and other stakeholders concerning portfolio services

Be aware of key budgetary issues affecting the portfolio of the Executive Member

Represent the Council on external bodies, as appointed, and feedback on issues of relevance/importance

Along with colleague Executive Councillors be available as appropriate for other councillors to discuss any queries or matters of concern

Note

The above duties and responsibilities are in addition to the Member's role as a Councillor

Role of Scrutiny Committee Chair

In order to help Executive Councillors to make decisions, the Council has appointed “scrutiny” committees. The role of these committees is to take a prior look at decisions which are coming before Executive Councillors and to comment on them to the Executive Councillor. The scrutiny committees also have a role in monitoring the performance of Council services and the quality of decisions made.

Purpose

To chair meetings fairly and without bias (except when speaking or voting) and ensure the Committee achieves its terms of reference.

Duties and responsibilities

To endeavour to engage all members of the Committee within the scrutiny process

To develop a constructive relationship with the portfolio holders by acting as a critical friend

To develop a constructive relationship with the Directors/Heads of Service in the areas that the Committee scrutinises

To assist transparency and opportunities for public say

Note

The above duties and responsibilities are in addition to the member’s role as a Councillor

Role of Chair of a committee with a regulatory role

There are some decisions which are the responsibility of committees appointed by the Council. These are commonly referred to as “regulatory” decisions. These include the granting of planning consent, the grant of licenses for the sale of alcohol, public entertainment, regulation of taxi drivers and the enforcement of various rules and regulations.

Purpose

To provide leadership of and direction to the Committee

To demonstrate to the public and participants in the committee’s work, there is fair and open decision making by the Committee

To chair meetings fairly and without bias (except when speaking and voting) and ensure the Committee achieves its terms of reference.

Duties and responsibilities

To endeavour to engage members of the Committee in its activities

To lead the Committee, in consultation with Officers, in prioritising its work

To develop a constructive relationship with the relevant Director and their staff and where appropriate, with relevant portfolio holders

To be willing to learn about the professional disciplines and services relevant to the work of the Committee

To Chair the committee in a fair and open manner in accordance with the procedures of the committee and for public engagement at meetings

To guide, with the assistance of officers, the committee to reach decisions based on the information presented to it.

Note

The above duties and responsibilities are in addition to the member’s role as a Councillor

Role of an Area Committee Chair

There are four area committees covering the city. Every councillor is a member of an area committee. Area Committees make decisions on local planning applications, grants, projects funded by developer contributions and environmental projects. They also discuss policing priorities for the local area and encourage the public to raise any issues of concern on the services in the local area through an open forum at each meeting..

Purpose

To provide leadership of and direction to the Area Committee

To chair the meeting fairly and without bias (except when speaking and voting) and ensure it achieves its terms of reference

To encourage public participation and involvement and ensure that those present are given an equal opportunity to make a contribution

Duties and responsibilities

Time managing the meeting to ensure that all issues on the agenda are discussed and relevant decisions are taken, in the time allowed.

With general discussion items, guest presentations and themed meetings the Chair also plays an important facilitation role – ensuring an interactive, and community orientated meeting.

Work with the Lead Officer and the Committee Manager in planning upcoming agendas and agreeing the structure of the meeting.

Make decision assigned to the role between meetings eg. approval (with Vice-Chair and spokesperson) for local projects funded by developer contributions.

Leader(s) of a political group

Most councillors choose to be members of a political group on the Council (there may be times when there are individual councillors not affiliated to any group). As well as the Leader(s), there will be spokespersons appointed by opposition groups to 'shadow' those in the ruling group holding responsibility as either an Executive Councillor or Chair of a regulatory committee.

Purpose

To provide effective leadership and strategic direction for a political group.

Duties and Responsibilities

To provide the leadership of a political group including when appropriate scrutiny of the ruling group's administration of the Council

To act as spokesperson for the group of which he/she is leader, to be a representative voice of a group for example and where applicable, in its dealings with central Government, other local authorities and their associations

To develop alternative policy positions where appropriate

To promote the long term financial, business and economic stability of the Council

To encourage the highest standards of probity and corporate governance

Note The above duties and responsibilities are in addition to the member's role as a councillor.