

Sevenoaks Town Council
Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 26th February 2024

Held in the Council Chamber, Town Council Offices, Bradbourne Vale Road, TN13 3QG

Livestreamed and available to view on YouTube until approved by Council:

<https://youtube.com/live/KuxdHNng8E3s?feature=share>

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 p.m.

Meeting Concluded: 7.32 p.m.

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|--|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Cllr Claire Shea, Mayor | Present | Cllr Chloe Gustard | Present |
| Cllr Libby Ancrum, Deputy Mayor | Present | Cllr Sally Layne | Present |
| Cllr Sue Camp | Present | Cllr Lionel O’Hara | Present |
| Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet | Present | Cllr Lise Michaelides | Present |
| Cllr Tony Clayton | Remote attendance* | Cllr David Skinner OBE | Present |
| Cllr Catherine Daniell | Present | Cllr Nick Varley | Present |
| Cllr Dr Peter Dixon | Apologies | Cllr Nigel Wightman | Remote Attendance* |
| Cllr Victoria Granville | Apologies | Cllr Gareth Willis | Present |

**Councillors attending via Zoom may take part in the discussion but are not permitted to vote on matters under consideration.*

In Attendance: Town Clerk, Responsible Finance Officer/Deputy Town Clerk, Senior Committee Clerk and Planning Committee Clerk.

Members of Public in Attendance: 6

Representations received from Members of the Public

Cllr Richard Streatfeild, Sevenoaks District Council & Kent County Council (KCC), gave an update on key matters at KCC, including that:

- The final measures in the budget saw £40 million of cost growth overall in Adult Social Care in 2024/25 with over 30 million in savings required in 2024/5 and over 90 million over three years.
- The future solvency of the County Council rests on delivery of these savings.
- This year that transformation to deliver the savings was being funded by areas not seen before: policy savings, one off capital receipts and dividends from KCC Ltd Companies.
- Children’s Mental Health Provision was a huge issue.
- There was significant concern about the impact on traffic of the additional border checks being introduced at Dover during the Summer.
- There was now a £100 million per year gap in the capital funding for the road network, every year for the next 10 years.
- Buses might be subject to commercial decisions due to ongoing issues with numbers and there would be a retender process. Importantly for Sevenoaks that includes school services.
- The JTB Working Group was progressing 20mph scheme.
- There is pressure still in the High Needs and SEND transport budget for children and young people. It is being managed by the agreement with central government but progress on SEND in Kent has been very slow since the inspection.

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- Youth Services had a one million pound cut in the budget for all commissioned youth service projects in Kent.
- Schools maintenance programme continues to see an increase in the funding gap.

692 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received and accepted as shown above.

693 Requests for Dispensations: none received.

694 Declarations of Interest: none received.

695 Minutes of the Meeting of Sevenoaks Town Council held on 15th January 2024

RESOLVED: to accept and sign the minutes of the Meeting of Sevenoaks Town Council held on 15th January 2024 as a true record.

696 Minutes of Committees

696.1 Planning Committee

RESOLVED: To receive and adopt the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 22nd January, 5th February and 19th February 2024 as true records.

696.2 Finance & General Purposes Committee

RESOLVED: To receive and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 15th January 2024 as a true record.

696.3 Youth Services Committee

RESOLVED: To receive and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Youth Services Committee held on 24th January 2024 as a true record.

696.4 Open Spaces & Leisure Committee

RESOLVED: To receive and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces & Leisure Committee held on 12th February 2024 as a true record.

697 Scheme of Delegation (including Council & Committee Terms of Reference)

The Council reviewed the Scheme of Delegation which brought together several existing documents. It was noted that the level of emergency expenditure delegated to the Chief Executive/Town Clerk outside of the agreed budget in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee had been increased from £5000 to £10,000.

RESOLVED: That the Sevenoaks Town Council Scheme of Delegation (including Council & Committees Terms of Reference), attached as Appendix, be approved and adopted.

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698. Longspring Woods

The Mayor presented the following update on the Longspring Woods Pledge Campaign:

“Sevenoaks Town Council registered the Longspring Woods as an Asset of Community Value on the grounds that it furthers the social wellbeing and recreational interests of the community.

When the Woods came up for sale this year it presented a real challenge to find the funds quickly to purchase the Woods for guaranteed current and future generations use.

The Town Council could use some of its funds of £100,000 from sale of land which needs to be spent on Capital Projects including acquisition of land.

It is one of the aims of the Town Council in its Green Community Investment Plan to act when, rarely but occasionally, land does come up for sale in Sevenoaks. The Town Council will seek to obtain additional land if it could be used for community benefit.

There was too little time to secure external grants even if these were available and therefore there was a real challenge for the remaining £100,000. The Town Council asked the Sevenoaks Community for help unsure of what to expect as it was a really big Ask to raise £100,000 in 23 days.

The Sevenoaks Community has been magnificent, pledges have been coming in from £5 upwards, many at £100, £1,000, and serious pledges of £10,000 and £50,000. School children and resident associations have worked together to provide joint pledges. Those who have been unable to donate have pledged Help In Kind including litter picking, gardening and manual labour.

Our thanks must also be extended to Warners Solicitors who have offered to provide the Conveyancing free of charge and Ben Bannister for his assistance in producing the promotional video.

As of today, a total of £102,975 has been pledged by Sevenoaks Community towards the purchase of Longspring Woods.”

Councillors joined the Mayor in thanking the Sevenoaks Community for its tremendous support for the project, recognising the speed of the response, the donation pledges from a wide range of people, together with offers of support in kind. The Chief Executive/Town Clerk and Planning Committee Clerk were thanked for their hard work in progressing the project so quickly.

It was noted that the next steps would be to discuss the conveyancing and to turn the pledges into cash.

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RESOLVED that:

- 1) Sevenoaks Town Council purchase the Longspring Woods, an Asset of Community Value, at a cost of £185,000, on the grounds that it furthers the social wellbeing and recreational interests of the community.
- 2) Sevenoaks Town Council proceed with the initial improvements as outlined in the Feasibility Study, as a cost of £25,500.
- 3) That the total cost of £210,500 be met as follows:
 - £100,000 from QH Capital Receipts
 - £102,975 from public pledges
 - £7,525 balance from Town Council Capital Reserve.

699 Reports to Council: Town Council Representatives on External Organisations

RESOLVED: To note the New Year Dinner held by Friends of Rheinbach, attended by the Deputy Mayor and Cllrs Canet, Dixon and Skinner.

700 Mayor's Engagements

The Mayor reported on recent engagements including Town Twinning events held by Friends of Pontoise and Friends of Rheinbach, and a thank you event for volunteers held by Sevenoaks Larder. She drew attention to forthcoming Mayoral Events – Mayor's Quiz Night on 16th March and the tour of Knole House on 17th April.

RESOLVED: To note and accept the reports relating to Mayoral activities:

- a) functions attended by the Mayor or her representative up to 20th February 2024; and
- b) forthcoming Civic Events being organised by the Mayor during 2023-24

701 Press Releases

RESOLVED: That a press release be issued in respect of the purchase of Longspring Woods

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting.

Signed

Mayor

Dated



Scheme of Delegation (including Council & Committees Terms of Reference)

Approved by Council: 26th February 2024

Review following each election or if change of Committee structure.

SCHEME OF DELEGATION

By this Scheme of Delegation, the Council in pursuance of its powers under section 101 of the LGA 1972 Local Government Act and in pursuance of its powers under section 15 of the LGA 2000 Local Government Act, General Power of Competence Localism Act 2011 and to the extent of their respective powers authorising the Proper Officer (Chief Executive / Town Clerk) and Responsible Financial Officer / Deputy Town Clerk, Standing Committees of the Council to act with delegated authority in the specific circumstances detailed.

The intention of the Scheme of Delegation is that the Council should act with all reasonable speed. Decisions should be taken at the most suitable level and that Officers are given power over the day to day administration and operation of the Council.

Sevenoaks Town Council is accredited with the General Power of Competence and a Local Council Gold Award status, Investor in People and a Civility and Respect Pledge.

Proper Officer (Chief Executive / Town Clerk) – Duties and Powers

The Proper Officer of the Council has statutory duties which are set down in legislation.

The Chief Executive / Town Clerk is the Proper Officer of the Council and as such is specifically authorised to:

- i) Receive Declarations of Acceptance of Office
- ii) Receive and Record notices from Councillors of Disclosing Interests
- iii) Receive, Retain and process plans and documents
- iv) Sign notices or other documents on behalf of the Council
- v) Sign and issue summonses to attend meetings of the Council and Committees
- vi) Give public notice of the time, place, and agenda at least three clear days before a meeting of the Council or Committees (provided that the public notice with agenda of an Extra Ordinary meeting of the Council convened by Councillors is signed by them)
- vii) Convene a meeting of the Council for the election of a new Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Council.

In addition, the Chief Executive / Town Clerk has the delegated authority to undertake the following matters on behalf of the Council:

- i) The day to day administration and operation of services, together with routine inspection and control.
- ii) Day to day supervision and control of all staff employed by the Council
- iii) Authorisation of routine expenditure within the agreed budget.
- iv) Emergency expenditure up to £10,000 outside of the agreed budget in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Finance & General Purposes Committee.
- v) Project Manage and associated expenditure on projects approved by the Council and up to budget approved.

Delegated actions of the Chief Executive / Town Clerk shall be in accordance with Legislation, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and this Scheme of Delegation and Committee Terms of Reference with directions given from the Council from time to time.

Delegated Authority is given to Council Officers to make decisions on behalf of the Committees, in the case of the Chief Executive / Town Clerk full Council, **on urgent matters between meetings**. These decisions are to be made after consultation with Councillors.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE / TOWN CLERK EMERGENCY DELEGATED AUTHORITY

In extreme cases for example the Covid pandemic lockdown Emergency Delegated Authority is required for the Chief Executive / Town Clerk (Deputy Town Clerk) to enable the day to day operation of Sevenoaks Town Council to continue to operate within legislation when the Council cannot meet in person and a legal alternative is not available.

The following is an example of the delegation used in such circumstances.

Council Meeting 23rd March 2020 Minute 567 ii)

RESOLVED: To agree emergency measures that if it was not possible to convene a meeting of the Council or Committee in reasonable time or where restrictions are in place, the Town Clerk (and Deputy Town Clerk) shall have delegated authority under s.101 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make decisions on behalf of the Council where such decision cannot be reasonably deferred and must be made in order to comply with a commercial or statutory deadline. This will be carried out where possible by consultation with members by electronic means or telephone. The Town Clerk will further consult with the Mayor for guidance as necessary. The delegation does not extend to matters expressly reserved to the council in legislation or in its Standing Orders or Financial Regulations. Any decision made under this delegation must be recorded in writing and must be published in accordance with the relevant regulations.

RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER

The Responsible Financial Officer within the meaning of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996 and subsequent legislation shall be responsible for the Town Council accounting procedures and financial governance in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations in force at any given time.

The Responsible Financial Officer as Deputy Town Clerk will also assume the Town Clerk's role if there is an absence and need.

The Responsible Financial Offer has delegated authority for day to day responsibility for:

- Fiscal Governance
- Accounts Management
- Budget & Financial Monitoring / Predictions
- Insurance
- Financial Risk Management
- Internal Financial Controls
- External & Internal Audits
- Payroll & Pensions administration
- VAT
- Performance of Finance Team
- Financial Transparency

TERMS OF REFERENCE – THE TOWN COUNCIL

1 **COUNCIL**

The Town Council is the final authority on matters of policy and the powers of duties exercised by the Council. The Town Council will be solely responsible for the following specific functions:-

- (a) The power of raising loans and setting the precept
- (b) The power of incurring capital expenditure not specifically included in the Council's approved estimates of expenditure for the time being
- (c) The appointment or dismissal of the Town Clerk
- (d) Appointment of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Leader, Deputy Leader
- (e) Appointment of Committees, Chairmen and Vice Chairmen thereof
- (f) Appointment of Representatives on Outside Bodies
- (g) Annual Subscriptions
- (h) Standing Orders as to the conduct of the Council's business
- (h) The Committee Structure including terms of reference, membership etc

STANDING COMMITTEES

Sevenoaks Town Council operates and governs under a committee system with the following delegated powers.

Councillors shall be members of the Standing Committees of the Council in accordance with standing orders.

All Councillors regardless of whether they are on a Committee will receive all Agendas, Supporting

Papers, and Minutes.

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

- (a) To study the long term aims and objectives of the Town Council and recommend such forward programmes and other steps as may be necessary to achieve the Council's objectives in whole or in part during specific time spans.
- (b) To consider all the following matters and have executive powers once general policy and expenditure has been approved by the Town Council.
 - (i) All financial matters and accounts for payment as provided for by the Financial Regulations
 - (ii) Annual Estimates
 - (iii) Capital Works Programme
 - (iv) Grant Aid
 - (v) Public Offices
 - (vi) Executive powers to be granted to officers and Committee Chairmen
 - (vii) Projects for the benefit of the Sevenoaks Community and to make recommendations thereon to the Council
 - (viii) Annual Management letter from the Auditors
 - (ix) Insurance policies
 - (x) Asset Register
 - (xi) Town Twinning and Liaison
 - (xii) To consider any general purposes business
 - (xiii) Town Team
 - (xiv) Assets including Bat & Ball Centre, Bat & Ball Station, Business Hub
 - (xv) Christmas Lighting & Town Centre Events/Festivals
 - (xvi) Markets

OPEN SPACES & LEISURE COMMITTEE

To consider all matters relating to the following items and have executive powers once general policy and expenditure has been approved by the Council.

- (a) Cemeteries
- (b) Lawn of Remembrance
- (c) Recreational Facilities
- (d) Refuse and litter collection; Grit Bins/Litter Bins
- (e) Allotments
- (f) Raleys Field, Knole Paddock, Greatness and associated developments
- (g) The Open Spaces, Woodlands, and Common Areas under the Council's control

- (h) Vine Gardens/Upper High Street Gardens
- (i) Sevenoaks Common and other Open Spaces
- (j) Seats, other than seats in bus shelters
- (k) Maintenance of footpaths
- (l) Rights of Way on both footpaths and bridleways including obstructions and applications for diversions; closure or creation of rights of way and to have executive powers regarding action necessary for dealing with obstructions of right of way
- (m) Public Shelters, Bus Shelters, and to have executive powers regarding urgent action necessary in the interest of public safety in these places
- (n) Town Clocks
- (o) Public Lavatories

PLANNING COMMITTEE

- (a) To consider and have executive powers except where future policy is being formulated properly the concern of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, to deal with all Town and Country Planning matters
- (b) To consider all matters relating to redevelopment schemes including the provision of attendant roads and ancillary parking
- (c) To consider all matters relating to traffic routes designed to reduce or remove traffic from the centres of the Town and the Upper High Street
- (d) To have authority to hold additional Planning meetings on Tuesdays when the fortnightly cycle of commenting on planning applications would be impossible to adhere to owing to Bank Holidays
- (e) The Chairman of the Committee, or in his/her absence the Vice Chairman, in consultation with one other Committee Member (to be a ward member for the premises concerned) and the Town Clerk, to have executive powers to make observations in respect of planning applications referred to the Town Council, where it is not possible to convene a meeting of the Committee in time to meet the deadline date for return of observations to the Planning Officer

Where this executive power has been exercised, the observations made to the Planning Officer are to be reported to the next meeting of the Town Planning Committee or direct to the next meeting of the Town Council if sooner
- (f) To consider and have executive power in respect of all matters relating to Licensing within the Parish, including licensing of premises for the sale of alcohol
- (g) The Chairman of the Committee or in his/her absence the Vice Chairman in consultation with one other Committee Member (to be a ward member for the premises concerned)

and the Town Clerk to have executive powers to make observations in respect of Licensing Applications referred to the Town Council where it is not possible to convene a meeting of the Committee in time to meet the deadline date for return of observations to the Licensing Authority.

Where this executive power has been exercised the observations made to the Licensing Authority are to be reported to the next meeting of the town Planning Committee or direct to the next meeting of the Town Council if sooner

- (i) To consider all matters relating to Highways (other than footway lighting) within the area of the Town Council including parking restrictions and street car parks, street signs, street numbering, traffic movements and routes, one way systems, maintenance, and cleaning
- (h) To consider all matters relating to:-
 - (1) Car Parks and car parking charges
 - (2) Public Transport Services associated with the Town
 - (3) Any proposed Motorway Interchanges affecting the Town
 - (4) Rail Services
 - (5) Air transport
- (j) To consider any long term aims and objectives of the Town Council in relation to the Local Plan and the Local Development Framework; Town Development and other strategic Town and Country Planning matters
- (k) All matters relating to road safety
- (l) Conservation Areas and Environmental Improvements except where relating to Town Council land and properties
- (m) Formation of Neighbourhood Plans (& Masterplans)
- (n) Tree Work Applications - The Chairman of the Committee or in his/her absence the Vice Chairman in consultation with another Committee member (to be a ward member for the site concerned) and the Town Clerk to have executive powers to make observations to the Local Planning Authority in respect of Tree Work applications (both Conservation Area and Tree Preservation Order) which the Town Council is notified of in order to maximise the opportunity to object to inappropriate works prior to a determination being reached by the Local Planning Authority.

Where this executive power has been exercised the observations made to the Local Planning Authority are to be reported to the next meeting of the Planning Committee or direct to the need meeting of the Town Council if sooner.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

To have executive authority in respect of all personnel matters, in particular:

- (a) Senior Staff appointments

- (b) The Council's establishment
- (c) Training report and evaluation

To make recommendations to Council on:-

- (d) Terms and conditions of service in respect of staff
- (e) Responsibility for Health and Safety Matters

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

To oversee the project management with delegated executive powers of the projects and priorities identified in the Community Investment Plan and Town Council's Priorities once approval has been given by the Town Council.

These to include:-

- (a) Approval of tenders
- (b) Approval of contractors
- (c) Expenditure to budget agreed by Council and Finance & General Purposes Committee.
- (d) Research and make recommendations to Council for new projects
- (e) To create the list for and approve the expenditure of the Community Infrastructure Levy income on projects.
- (f) Submit Planning Applications for projects as identified.
- (g) Submit Funding Applications for projects as identified.

YOUTH SERVICES COMMITTEE

To consider all matters relating to the following items and have executive powers once general policy and expenditure has been approved by the Council:

- (a) Sevenoaks Youth Council
- (b) House in the Basement Youth Café
- (c) Liaising and working with other youth service providers with aim of assessing needs and to encourage and support activities with the aim of fostering the personal development of young people.

- (d) Arranging events and facilities for young people
- (e) The Youth Services Committee may co-opt non-voting members to the Committee, including two Youth Councillors.
- (f) Meetings of the Youth Services Committee normally to be held after Youth Council meetings.
- (g) A quorum of the Youth Services Committee will be three voting (elected) members
- (h) Have executive authority to award Youth Grants to the
- (i) The Youth Services Sub Committee shall be constructed as follows:-
- A minimum of six Town Councillors one of whom shall be the Chair to be appointed at the Annual Meeting of the Town Council, plus the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee and the Town Mayor (both ex-officio). The Youth Sub Committee is to increase its youth membership from members of the Youth Council and other organisations.
- (j) Co-opted members
- Members to be invited from other youth groups i.e.
- i) Sevenoaks Youth Council
- ii) Other Youth Groups
- iii) Hillingdon & Greatness Youth Forum
- iv) Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust
- v) West Kent Housing Association
- vi) Community Safety Team
- (k) All Co-Opted members of the Committee would not be voting members; it is hoped most decisions would be agreed by consensus and will serve for a period of one year but can be re-elected.
- (l) Finance
- (i) The Youth Services Committee shall act within the budgets associated with its activities for:
- Youth Council
 - HitB Youth Café
 - Youth Grants
- (ii) The Youth Services Committee shall have executive authority to determine grant awards up to and provided the amount is within the allocated Youth Grants annual budget.
- (iii) Recommendations on Grants exceeding the Youth Grants annual budget will be made to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.
- (iv) The Committee shall not normally support applications for funding of a

service for a period exceeding three years, nor application forms from individuals without the demonstrated support of a recognised group, club, or organisation.

BAT & BALL CENTRE / STATION USER GROUP

The aim of the Users Group is to assist the operation and development of the Bat & Ball Centre and Bat & Ball Station. The Group may suggest, where applicable, improvements or ideas.

The management and day to day operation of the Centre and Station are not matters for the User Group.

(a) Membership will consist of the following representatives: -

- (i) 2 Town Councillors
- (ii) User Groups

The Chief Executive/Town Clerk or an appropriate substitute will attend all meetings.

(b) The Council will invite organisations who use the centre to nominate representatives to the Group to ensure community input to the Bat & Ball Centre and to the Bat & Ball Station

(c) A Councillor is to be elected annually as Chair of the User Group, together with one other Councillor. Should the Chair step down during the term of office, the other Councillor will assume the role until the end of the term.

(d) Agendas for meetings will be compiled by the Town Council

(e) The Group will normally meet two times per year

(f) The Town Council may consult the User Group, as appropriate, about any projects relating to the Bat & Ball Centre and Bat & Ball Station.

(g) A quorum will be the Chair, or in their absence, a representative, together with 3 other representatives.

(h) Membership of the Group is voluntary, and no expenses or remuneration are paid.

(i) Suggestions and / or ideas formulated by the Group for presentation to the Town Council, must be supported by a majority vote at the Groups' meeting. The Chair, if necessary, will have a casting vote.

(j) Notes of meetings to be reported to the Finance & General Purposes Committee

MAYOR OF SEVENOAKS TOWN

Sevenoaks Town Council is a small local authority which does not have the legal powers to operate with a 'portfolio' system as per larger local authorities. Decisions are made in a transparent manner in public by being placed on an agenda and discussed and a decision made within Council or a Committee meeting.

The Mayor is not directly elected and is chosen at the May Annual Meeting from the sixteen elected members. It is normal protocol for the Deputy Mayor to become Mayor Elect.

The Mayor is responsible for Chairing the full Council meetings in a fair and transparent manner and summarising decisions that have been made. If required, the Mayor will have a casting vote.

In addition, the Mayor is a non-voting member of all Committees and will Chair the Annual Town Public Meeting and any other Public Meetings which could be called.

The Mayor does not have any executive powers to instruct staff, and or make decisions between meetings.

The Mayor represents the Council at civic and public events.

CHAIR OF COMMITTEES

Sevenoaks Town Council is a small local authority which does not have the legal powers to operate with a 'portfolio' system as per larger local authorities. Decisions are made in a transparent manner in public by being placed on an agenda and discussed and a decision made within a Committee.

The Chair is responsible for Chairing the Committee in a fair and transparent manner and summarising decisions that have been made. If required, the Chair of the Committee will have a casting vote.

The Chair does not have any executive powers to instruct staff, and or make decisions between meetings.

LEADER & DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL PROCESS & PROTOCOL

In the unusual situation where all councillors on Sevenoaks Town Council are from a single party, to ensure transparency, clarity, and accountability in the way the Council operates, for life of the current Council the following Process & Protocol for Sevenoaks Town Council Leader and Deputy Leader has been adopted and will be reviewed at each Annual Meeting in May.

PROCESS

Leader of the Council

1. The Annual Council Meeting may elect a Councillor as Leader of the Council, at the same time they may elect a Deputy Leader of the Council.
2. The Leader of the Council may be replaced at any meeting of Full Council. Motion to replace the Leader must be notified in the Agenda.
3. The Leader of the Council will usually be the Leader of the largest political group of Councillors.
4. The Leader is the most senior Councillor of the Council politically. The Leader will lead the decision-making process at Councillor level and liaise with the Town Clerk on those issues, forward plans and matters of policy or strategic direction. The Leader has no legal status or civic and ceremonial responsibilities.
5. The Town Clerk may use the Leader and Chairs of Committees as a 'sounding board' in advance of formal consideration of any matter to assist in gauging likely Councillor reaction to a proposal,
6. The Deputy Leader can deputise for any actions normally carried out by the Leader.

LEADER PROTOCOL

Introduction

This protocol aims to ensure that the Leader and the Town Clerk are guided by a set of ground rules designed to maintain high standards of public accountability, mutual respect, and an understanding of the Council's decision-making structures. If a Deputy Leader has been elected, this protocol shall also apply when the Deputy is acting in place of the Leader.

1. General Principles

- i) In accordance with the Statutory Code of Conduct, the Leader must not use Council resources for party political purposes. The Leader must uphold the political impartiality of the Town Clerk, and not ask the Town Clerk to act in any way which would conflict with the Council's Officer Professional Code of Conduct, Protocol on Member / Officer relationships, or Conditions of Service.
- ii) The Leader does not have line management responsibilities for the Town Clerk and should not issue management instructions to the Town Clerk.
- iii) Where a decision is required following discussion between the Leader and the Town Clerk, the matter will be submitted to Council or a Committee for consideration, unless the matter is already delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Leader.
- iv) Matters wholly within the responsibility of the Town Clerk, or which have been delegated to the Town Clerk without consultation requirements, may still be discussed between the Leader and the Town Clerk.
- v) In undertaking their roles, the Leader and Town Clerk should respect the following principles:

Principle 1 As a 'visible' and accountable elected representative, with defined responsibilities, the Leader will need to be properly briefed on all significant aspects of the work of the Council. The Town Clerk should ensure a proper information flow so as to ensure that the Leader can effectively 'lead'.

Principle 2 Good communications can be best achieved through planned and programmed meetings and briefing arrangements. On the basis that the Town Clerk should be ensuring that the information needs of the Leader are met. The Leader, should in turn, seek to avoid making requests for unanticipated briefings.

Principle 3 The Leader (and all the Councillors) should channel significant requests for information, advice, and other support via the Town Clerk (or in absence Deputy Town Clerk – in which case the Town Clerk will be copied into requests). Other arrangements may apply as agreed and established between the Leader and the Town Clerk. The Leader shall not approach other staff directly with requests for information (except in the cases of emergency in the absence of the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk) or seek to commission work from individual staff, as this may confuse day-to-day line management accountabilities.

Principle 4 The Leader may work with the Town Clerk and or the other senior managers in the development of policies and programmes.

Principle 5 All Councillors have collective responsibility to the Council for the conduct of employment policy, and the Council acts as the employing body for all Council staff. Employment policies, having been set by the Council, are implemented via the Town Clerk.

Principle 6 When a report to Committee or Council is being prepared, the Leader is entitled to discuss issues with the Town Clerk and with other officers concerning the contents of such reports and the framing of recommendations. Whilst the Leader may wish to make suggestions on content and drafting, the Leader should not attempt to edit out or override any content of reports which the Town Clerk or other officer feels is important to put before the Council.

Principle 7 When the Leader (and all Councillors) wish to put forward proposals of their own, it is the responsibility of the Councillor (via the Town Clerk) to produce a report to the relevant Committee for consideration. The Town Clerk may wish, and has a right, to add comments to such reports.

Principle 8 The Town Clerk, managers and other officers exercise statutory functions and have individual responsibilities. The Leader should understand and respect these roles.

2 The Leader and Fellow Councillors

- i) The distinctive role of the Mayor, Committee Chairs and Councillors are already well established at the Town Council.
- ii) The Leader should ensure to consult as necessary with colleagues in the early stages of formulating proposals. Committee Chairs, in particular, should be consulted on issues relevant to their Committee and the Mayor should be involved in any civic related matters or issues which may affect the conduct of Council meetings.

Principle 9 nothing in these arrangements shall infringe:

- The right and duty of each individual councillors to speak and vote according to their best judgement
- The right of all councillors to information and guidance from Council officers, or
- The duty of Council officers to support each councillor with equal consideration