



## **Kirklees Democracy Commission Cross Party Working Group – Wednesday 24 October 2018**

### **The Changing Councillor Role and How it is Supported - Update**

#### **Background and Context**

At the meeting of the Cross Party Working Group on Tuesday 26 June 2018 Councillors Scott and Taylor were nominated to lead on the work to look at the changing councillor role and how it should be supported moving forward. This paper focusses on the work that has taken place to look at the changing councillor role.

In order to gain a different perspective on the councillor role Councillors Scott and Taylor asked that a cross section of middle managers from across the council be brought together to take part in a workshop discussion. A total of 27 officers attended the session on 17 September 2018 where they were asked to consider the following questions:

- What are the roles that Councillors need to play in the future?
- What do you think it would take to be effective in those roles?

The outcome of those discussions has been collated and captured in Appendix 1. Clearly this is a lot of information and, at some point, further work will need to take place to refine the content into a final role profile for a Kirklees councillor. In order to triangulate the work it is suggested that a similar exercise is carried out with a cross section of Kirklees citizens.

The Cross Party Working Group is asked to:

- Consider and comment on the outcomes of the officer workshop, as set out in Appendix 1;
- Consider whether or not to carry out a similar exercise with a cross section of Kirklees citizens;

Carl Whistlecraft  
Head of Democracy

## Appendix 1

<b>Councillor Role: Advocating &amp; Representing</b>
<p><b>Involves:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being the voice of the community and building bridges across those communities;</li> <li>• Advocating for all, especially the vulnerable;</li> <li>• Empowering communities to take decisions;</li> <li>• Speaking to people of all ages across the area;</li> <li>• Being visible and connecting and developing relationships with key stake holders;</li> <li>• Collaborating and co-creating with organisations and communities;</li> <li>• Getting the right thing for our 'area' in negotiations;</li> <li>• Doing things for the right reason and the good of the public;</li> <li>• Being genuinely representative (actively seek view/get out there)</li> </ul>
<p><b>What it will take to be effective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being well networked</li> <li>• Having insight into the communities represented (local intelligence – to feed into redesign)</li> <li>• Signposting residents to council services</li> <li>• Using a range of approaches to engage and communicate e.g. Ward forums, surgeries, door-knocking, social media</li> <li>• Working together as a team in the ward</li> <li>• Having good working relationships with officers</li> <li>• Being pro-active at a community level</li> <li>• Responding quickly</li> <li>• Working to reasonable timescales and planning ahead (be less knee-jerky)</li> <li>• Challenging back to their communities</li> <li>• Knowing the patch and the place</li> <li>• Linking between officers and communities</li> </ul>

**Councillor Role: Working Constructively with Officers****Involves**

- Knowing the boundaries between officers and councillors;
- Trusting officers as professionals;
- Adhering to minimum standards and basic knowledge;
- Being a critical friend to officers;
- Constructively challenging officers (where appropriate!);
- Contributing to a relationship based on mutual respect with officers;
- Listening to officers;
- Involving officers in the development of ideas.

**What it will take to be effective**

- Having meetings (when required) and conversations with officers to build relationships and develop a shared understanding;
- Acknowledging that officers are the professional “experts”
- Being realistic in terms of timescales and expectations
- Knowing the right officer at the right level
- Asking the right question – be clear about what you want
- Being honest about what can and can’t be delivered
- Modelling the expected standards and behaviours

**Councillor Role: Influencing and Making Decisions****Involves**

- Using evidence to make informed decisions;
- Influencing and being involved in decision making, even when not a Cabinet member;
- Working together for common causes (and work across political boundaries)
- Being entrepreneurial and ambitious
- Seeking win-win outcomes and working in partnership (and know how to do this well)
- Innovating and not jumping to solutions
- Informing debate and compromise
- Ensuring community priorities and aspirations are fed into decision making.

**What it will take to be effective**

- Having a long term strategy for your area i.e. knowing the vision and values of the 'place'
- Understanding and communicating the impact that decisions will have;
- Delegating powers to multi-disciplinary community based forums
- Providing officers with an insight into the community needs
- Listening to officers who can advise and provide options (& risks)
- Being prepared to listen & take advice, and consider options

**Councillor Role: Being Political****Involves**

- Balancing politics and strategy;
- Being party political whilst still focussing on the task / issue
- Sometimes looking to work on a cross party basis to find system wide solutions;
- Giving things time to embed and see the results – don't keep changing direction;
- Long term planning/vision and recognising the time these need to be delivered;
- Taking ownership.

**What it will take to be effective**

- Not involving officers in the party politics;
- Understanding that officers have different levels of political understanding;
- Working with officers to develop their understanding of politics – in a non-political way;
- Being outcome focused and not politically focused;
- Understanding that officers are working across the whole council and not just for their ward;
- Balancing the local focus vs borough wide focus;
- Working together across wards;
- Recognising that every area won't get the same level of resources/prioritising the resources/long term planning;
- Knowing when to play politics and when to put it aside for the greater good.

**Councillor Role: Leadership and Partnership Working****Involves**

- Being an ambassador for Kirklees;
- Being part of cross party working for the good of local communities;
- Understanding and being involved in setting priorities for the council, including budget setting;
- Playing a part in regional leadership;
- Representing Kirklees regionally and nationally;
- Not insisting on purely local solutions where Kirklees wide solutions may provide better outcomes;
- Leading medium to long term strategic planning for the area;
- Knowing, linking and engaging with partners;
- Balancing Kirklees wide with ward level strategy and priorities;

**What it will take to be effective**

- Knowing 'your patch';
- Knowing who the key partners and stakeholders are;
- Understanding the holistic needs of the council and its communities;
- Understand the wider regional context and the benefits for Kirklees and your Ward;
- Having a long term vision and goals for you Ward and allowing time to come to fruition (>1 year);
- Being business like, innovative and consistent in approach;
- Understanding the opportunities of place based working

**Councillor Role: Core Expectations and Personal Development****Involves**

- Fulfilling the whole of the role;
- Having passion for the role;
- Being open and committed to personal development and challenge;
- Being IT savvy and digitally literate;
- Being accessible to constituents;
- Following standards and protocols;
- Attending and preparing for meetings by reading reports and complying with the rules and regulations governing those meetings;

**What it will take to be effective**

- Taking responsibility for personal development and undertaking any relevant training (including induction);
- Accessing coaching and mentoring opportunities;
- Understanding and following the protocols, statutory functions and responsibilities relating to the councillor role;
- Understanding the council and having a realistic view of what it can and can't do
- Having an understanding of IT, digital & social media.
- Having performance standards and being performance managed