



## Kirklees Democracy Commission Cross Party Working Group – Wednesday 7 August 2019

### The Changing Councillor Role

#### 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.

One of the outcomes covered by this mandate is:

- 1. The councillor role is clear, widely communicated and universally understood;***

We held a workshop with 27 middle managers on 17 September and 5 cross party experienced and new Councillors on 19 December which asked the following questions about the Councillor role:

- 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 these discussions have been collated and captured at **Appendix 1** (Common themes have been highlighted in italics).

**NOTE:** A further engagement activity will take place with Kirklees citizens.

Thereafter all the information and insight captured will be used as a basis for developing a new role profile.

#### The Cross Party Working Group is asked to:

- Consider and comment on the outcomes of the officer and Councillor workshop, as set out in Appendix 1;
- Agree the next steps with regards to this piece of work.

Deborah Nicholson and Vina Randhawa, Democracy Service



## Appendix 1

<b>Councillor Role: Advocating &amp; Representing</b>	
<b>Involves:</b>	<b>Involves:</b>
<b>MIDDLE MANAGERS</b>	<b>COUNCILLORS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Being the voice of the community and building bridges across those communities;</i></li> <li>• <i>Collaborating and co-creating with organisations and communities;</i></li> <li>• <i>Advocating for vulnerable individuals;</i></li> <li>• <i>Empowering communities to take decisions;</i></li> <li>• <i>Speaking to people of all ages across the area;</i></li> <li>• <i>Being visible and connecting and developing relationships with key stake holders;</i></li> <li>• <i>Getting the right thing for our 'area' in negotiations;</i></li> <li>• <i>Doing things for the right reason and the good of the public;</i></li> <li>• <i>Being genuinely representative (actively seek view/get out there)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Spokesperson of the Community;</i></li> <li>• <i>Working together – common causes;</i></li> <li>• <i>Ambassador for the area that you represent and Kirklees as a whole;</i></li> <li>• <i>Dealing with a multitude of topics, juggling lots of things;</i></li> <li>• <i>Enabler;</i></li> <li>• <i>Knowledgeable about your area;</i></li> <li>• <i>Act as an advisor;</i></li> <li>• <i>Mediator;</i></li> <li>• <i>Caseworker;</i></li> <li>• <i>Campaigner;</i></li> </ul>
<b>What it will take to be effective</b>	<b>What it will take to be effective</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Being well networked;</i></li> <li>• <i>Having insight into the communities represented (local intelligence – to feed into redesign);</i></li> <li>• <i>Signposting residents to council services;</i></li> <li>• <i>Using a range of approaches to engage and communicate e.g. Ward forums, surgeries, door-knocking, social media;</i></li> <li>• <i>Working together as a team in the ward;</i></li> <li>• <i>Having good working relationships with officers;</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Networking, motivating knowing who in the council to contact;</i></li> <li>• <i>Getting around the area, going to regular meetings, liaising with schools, try to find out local names for places;</i></li> <li>• <i>Respect, knowing the area, networking skills, promotion skills, raising profile of the area;</i></li> <li>• <i>Know who to get the correct advice/experts in the field from, know who to signpost people to for advice, resource knowledge, up to date phonefile or email address;</i></li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Understand the issue, who to approach, IT skills, be approachable, honesty;</i></li> <li>• <i>Communication – being approachable, flexible, having IT skills, face to face meetings with officers and other Cllrs e.g. ward meetings with highways;</i></li> <li>• <i>Clear understanding of the end goal, social media/IT skills, communication skills, networking skills, researching skills and where to go for advice and time management;</i></li> <li>• Time management, work and life balance, being flexible in your thinking, multi-tasking, keeping records;</li> <li>• Public speaking, listening skills, preparation;</li> <li>• Remain neutral, be aware of your position, don't give an opinion, be aware of your own safety when visiting constituents, e.g. when dealing with neighbour disputes etc;</li> </ul>
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<b>Councillor Role: Working Constructively with Officers</b>	
<b>Involves</b>	<b>Involves</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing the boundaries between officers and councillors;</li> <li>• Trusting officers as professionals;</li> <li>• Adhering to minimum standards and basic knowledge;</li> <li>• Being a critical friend to officers;</li> <li>• Constructively challenging officers (where appropriate!);</li> <li>• Contributing to a relationship based on mutual respect with officers;</li> <li>• Listening to officers;</li> <li>• Involving officers in the development of ideas;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officer/Councillor networks;</li> <li>• Respect – public and officers – both ways;</li> </ul>
<b>What it will take to be effective</b>	<b>What it will take to be effective</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having regular meetings and conversations with officers to build relationships and develop a shared understanding;</li> <li>• Acknowledging that officers are the professional “experts”;</li> <li>• Being realistic in terms of timescales and expectations;</li> <li>• Knowing the right officer at the right level;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great reliance on experienced officers;</li> <li>• Officers are helpful and need to be;</li> <li>• Officers must be treated with due respect and often they will go the extra mile;</li> <li>• Officers must also respect Councillors and try and understand that they have a multitude of roles and jobs that they do both in and out of the authority;</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking the right question – be clear about what you want;</li> <li>• Being honest about what can and can't be delivered;</li> <li>• Modelling the expected standards and behaviours;</li> </ul>	
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## Councillor Role: Influencing and Making Decisions

<b>Involves</b>	<b>Involves</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Using evidence to make informed decisions;</i></li> <li>• Influencing and being involved in decision making, even when not a Cabinet member;</li> <li>• Working together for common causes (and work across political boundaries);</li> <li>• Being entrepreneurial and ambitious;</li> <li>• Compromising and work in partnership (and know how to do this well);</li> <li>• Innovating and not jumping to solutions;</li> <li>• Informing debate and compromise;</li> <li>• Ensuring community priorities and aspirations are fed into decision making;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Decision maker;</i></li> <li>• No money – apologise;</li> <li>• Debate and compromise;</li> </ul>
<b>What it will take to be effective</b>	<b>What it will take to be effective</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a long term strategy for your area i.e. knowing the vision and values of the 'place';</li> <li>• Understanding and communicating the impact that decisions will have;</li> <li>• Delegating powers to multi-disciplinary community based forums;</li> <li>• Providing officers with an insight into the community needs;</li> <li>• Listening to officers who can advise and provide options (&amp; risks);</li> <li>• Being prepared to listen &amp; take advice, and consider options;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be open about the demands on the Council budgets by sometimes being inventive Councillors can often find another way;</li> <li>• That ultimately we are a political organisation, we respect advice given, but the buck stops with us. So we must be brave and take decisions which are sometimes upsetting;</li> <li>• Life is a compromise, debating is good because occasionally ideas can spring from the most barren source;</li> </ul>

## Councillor Role: Being Political

<b>Involves</b>	<b>Involves</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balancing politics and strategy;</li> <li>• Being party political whilst still focussing on the task / issue;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political campaigner;</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes looking to work on a cross party basis to find system wide solutions;</li> <li>• Giving things time to embed and see the results – don't keep changing direction;</li> <li>• Long term planning/vision and recognising the time these need to be delivered;</li> <li>• Taking ownership;</li> </ul>	
<p><b>What it will take to be effective</b></p>	<p><b>What it will take to be effective</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not involving officers in the party politics;</li> <li>• Understanding that officers have different levels of political understanding;</li> <li>• Working with officers to develop their understanding of politics – <u>in a non-political way</u>;</li> <li>• Being outcome focused and not politically focused;</li> <li>• Understanding that officers are working across the whole council and not just for their ward;</li> <li>• Balancing the local focus vs borough wide focus;</li> <li>• Working together across wards;</li> <li>• Recognising that every area won't get the same level of resources/prioritising the resources/long term planning;</li> <li>• Knowing when to play politics and when to put it aside for the greater good;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We never stop campaigning in one form or another;</li> <li>• We are political animals and have different views on many things whether it be strategically, letters, leaflets, telephone;</li> <li>• Meeting people on the bus/trains in the shops or just walking about in the street;</li> <li>• How we illustrate the difference between us and depending on the circumstances, how we may have to compromise to get policies through;</li> </ul>

<b>Councillor Role: Leadership and Partnership Working</b>	
<b>Involves</b>	<b>Involves</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being an ambassador for Kirklees;</li> <li>• Being part of cross party working for the good of local communities;</li> <li>• Understanding and being involved in setting priorities for the council, including budget setting;</li> <li>• Playing a part in regional leadership;</li> <li>• Representing Kirklees regionally and nationally;</li> <li>• Not insisting on purely local solutions where Kirklees wide solutions may provide better outcomes;</li> <li>• Leading medium to long term strategic planning for the area;</li> <li>• Knowing, linking and engaging with partners;</li> <li>• Balancing Kirklees wide with ward level strategy and priorities;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop networks;</li> <li>• Leader of the community;</li> <li>• Networking with Councillors from other local authorities;</li> </ul>
<b>What it will take to be effective</b>	<b>What it will take to be effective</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing 'your patch';</li> <li>• Knowing who the key partners and stakeholders are;</li> <li>• Understanding the holistic needs of the council and its communities;</li> <li>• Understand the wider regional context and the benefits for Kirklees and your Ward;</li> <li>• Having a long term vision and goals for you Ward and allowing time to come to fruition (&gt;1 year);</li> <li>• Being business like, innovative and consistent in approach;</li> <li>• Understanding the opportunities of place based working;</li> </ul>	

<b>Councillor Role: Core Expectations and Personal Development</b>	
<b>Involves</b>	<b>Involves</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Following standards and protocols;</i></li> <li>• <i>Being open and committed to personal development and challenge;</i></li> <li>• Fulfilling the <u>whole</u> of the role;</li> <li>• Having passion for the role;</li> <li>• Being open and committed to personal development and challenge;</li> <li>• Being IT savvy and digitally literate;</li> <li>• Being accessible to constituents;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Standards and protocols;</i></li> <li>• <i>Training and development – never stops;</i></li> <li>• Acting in a professional way;</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending and preparing for meetings by reading reports and complying with the rules and regulations governing those meetings;</li> </ul>	
<b>What it will take to be effective</b>	<b>What it will take to be effective</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking responsibility for personal development and undertaking any relevant training (including induction);</li> <li>• Accessing coaching and mentoring opportunities;</li> <li>• Understanding and following the protocols, statutory functions and responsibilities relating to the councillor role;</li> <li>• Understanding the council and having a realistic view of what it can and can't do;</li> <li>• Having an understanding of IT, digital &amp; social media;</li> <li>• Having performance standards and being performance managed;</li> </ul>	