



Kirklees Democracy Commission Cross Party Working Group – Monday 27 January 2020

The Changing Councillor Role and how it is supported

Background and Context

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the areas covered in this mandate which are:

- ***Councillors have the confidence, skills, support and capacity to lead the changing relationship between the council and local citizens. They are placed at the heart of the Council;***
- ***The Councillor role is clear, widely communicated and universally understood;***
- ***Councillors are accessible and confident in their role in a digitally networked society;***

Support and being placed at the heart of the Council

In order to support our ongoing commitment to place Councillors at the heart of the Council, the Councillor Support & Liaison Team has been expanded. This will see an increase in the direct and dedicated support available to Councillors resulting in beginning to meet the following outcomes. Councillors will:

- Have the tools, confidence, skills, knowledge and information to carry out their Ward role effectively;
- Have a central point of contact to assist them in case work management and issue resolution on behalf of the citizens they represent;
- Be equipped with the appropriate technology and digital capability to effectively carry out their community leadership responsibilities;
- Have an identified officer to act as a conduit and problem solver with the wider organisation;
- Be placed at the heart of citizen engagement and equipped with the insight and intelligence to translate this into tangible actions.

- Have in full view the resources and opportunities to facilitate Ward and Sub Ward priority outcomes.

In practice this means:

- Establishing a dedicated Councillor Support and Liaison team that is a central point of contact for all councillors;
- Creating an advocacy function for councillors to support and facilitate management and resolution of case work;
- Increasing the scope and potential of the Councillor Account as the principal tool for the provision of Ward based information, news and intelligence;
- Introducing direct support to facilitate the Active Citizens and Places Team in planning citizen engagement and inputting and collating the outcomes of such Place Standard engagement. This will ensure councillors are equipped with the outcomes and insight arising from place based engagement in a swift and timely manner;
- Ensuring that all relevant grant and funding mechanisms are captured and monitored in a way that aligns with our developing approach to place based working;

Next Steps:

The new Councillor Support & Liaison Team started their new roles on Monday 13th January. The team are undergoing an intensive induction and training period where they will receive in-depth training in all areas of their new role. This has already included meeting Councillors who have been part of the induction and thereby beginning to form good working relationships with Councillors and understanding the importance of placing Councillors at the heart of the Council.

Work is underway to put in place internal systems and process so that the Councillor Support & Liaison Team can carry out an efficient advocacy role and support Councillors in the management and resolution of their casework work.

A small number of Councillors will be identified to trial advocacy support, which will be followed by assessment and inclusion of any required changes following the trial period.

Communication will take place within the organisation and discussions will take place with Councillors to discuss their individual requirements. It is anticipated that following the trial, advocacy will be offered to Councillors elected in May and rolled out to all Councillors in the new Municipal Year.

Councillor Role

Following engagement with Councillors, middle managers and citizens, a new Councillor Role Profile has been produced.

This was received and noted by the Members' Allowances Independent Review Panel at their meeting on Friday 10th January 2020 and will be used as part of a root and branch review of the Members' Allowances Scheme which is planned for Summer 2020.

In their lead role in this area, Cllr Cathy Scott and Cllr John Taylor have determined that the role profile will be shared with Group Leaders at the next Leading Members meeting on Monday 10th February before being issued to Group Business Managers.

Digitally Networked

As part of our [Networked Councillors project](#), we have agreed to try out some practical tools and activities to help citizens and councillors connect and work together for civic good, based on what we've learned from our councillors and citizens.

We will begin some pilot activities in two wards in February 2020, and we are planning learning activities for May 2020. Priorities identified by councillors include: examples of good content, practical and themed sessions, and templates (also popular were: informal discussions, collaboration with citizens and peer support). Priorities identified by citizens include: knowing the basics about local democracy, having timely information, growing relationships and choosing the right tools.

The profile of councillors in their wards clearly matters to both citizens and councillors, so we are focussed on finding tools and approaches that will work in our wards.

The Cross Party Working Group is asked to:

- Consider and comment on the update and in particular inform the priorities and areas of focus for the new Councillor Support & Liaison Team.

Deborah Nicholson and Diane Sims, Democracy Service