

LEAD MEMBER PROTOCOL

1) Introduction

Lead Members are elected Members who act as an advocate or spokesperson for a specific area of the Council's business. The primary responsibility of each Lead Member is to encourage communication with members of all party groups, Council officers and key partners as appropriate to ensure decisions are well informed and that Council policies are widely understood and positively promoted both internally and externally.

2) Appointment of Lead Members

- a) Appointment of Lead Members will be made by Full Council and in an election year will be appointed at the next ordinary meeting of Full Council following the Annual Council meeting.
- b) A proposal for a new Lead Member role may be made by a motion to Council or a recommendation from a Committee. It is recommended that Group Leaders should be consulted and advice from the Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer and Monitoring Officer sought prior to the submission of such a motion.
- c) A Lead Member is expected to serve for the term of office to ensure stability in the role.
- d) Lead Members are not subject to political proportionality rules and therefore the appointments should be made based on skills, knowledge, suitability for the role and relevant national and local guidance. Each political group will be made aware of proposals to appoint Lead Members and given the opportunity to submit nominations.
- e) A Lead Member may resign from office by giving written notice to the Chief Executive and notifying their Group Leader. The position will remain vacant until the appointment is made at the next Council meeting.

3) Role of Lead Members

- a) To contribute actively to the formation of the Council's policies, budget, strategies and service delivery so far as they affect the area for which they lead.
- b) To have a clear understanding and an in depth knowledge of the area of responsibility and an awareness of current agreed policies in respect of that area.
- c) To consult and communicate with members of all party groups, Council officers and key partners as appropriate to ensure decisions are well informed and that Council policies are widely understood and positively promoted.

- d) To provide Full Council with an annual update report on the work of the Lead Member, performance of the subject area and any issues that have arisen
- e) If not a member of the Strategy and Resources Committee, to attend meetings where required and to present reports to the Committee in respect of their specific area.
- f) To attend, if required, the Policy Development Committee where necessary in order to participate and contribute to policy development or studies.
- g) To act as spokesperson for the relevant area unless the Leader considers differently.
- h) If it is considered appropriate for a specific task, to recommend the setting up of a working party with Councillors or external stakeholders and that the terms of reference of the proposed working group be presented to the Strategy and Resources Committee for consideration and approval.

4) Parameters of Lead Member Role

The role is set in the context of a specific area of the Council's business. The following parameters apply to the role:

- a) All Lead Members must act reasonably in the role.
- b) All Lead Members must recognise and work effectively within the political management and working arrangements agreed by the Council.
- c) Is effectively given authority by North Devon Council to take all reasonable actions judged by the Member as being necessary to perform the role of Lead Member.
- d) Cannot commit the Council in any way that is contrary to established policy and practice but may confirm a Council position as stated in published policy.
- e) Cannot make decisions that bind the Council and must have regard to any budget implications which may arise.
- f) Must adhere to the Social Media Policy and liaise with the Communications team on all forms of contact with the press and media including if they have been approached by the media for comment.
- g) Is entitled to have access to the information held by the Council relating to the specific area and access to a reasonable amount of officer time to discuss that information but may not commit officer time to such an extent that other priority work required of officers is prejudiced.
- h) Where a democratic decision is required in relation to the specific area of a Lead Member and that Lead Member is also a Chair of Council or a Committee, that the Lead Member consider not chairing the meeting for that particular item and that the Vice-Chair (if present) chair the meeting for that particular item.

5) Arrangements put in place by the Council

The Council will put the following arrangements in place:

- a) Promote an understanding within the Council of the role of a Lead Member and with our partners, external bodies and community.
- b) Where appropriate to do so, arrange to designate a Lead Officer to support each Lead Member appointed.
- c) Ensure that the designated Lead Officer for each Lead Member is aware of the appointments and the rights of the Lead Members have to access and discuss information about the service.
- d) As a minimum, each Lead Member will be invited to provide a report on an annual basis to Council on the performance of the service area and on any issues arising.
- e) As appropriate, invite Lead Members to act as its representative on relevant external bodies and stakeholder meetings where Council representation is required or sought.
- f) Put in place any training required to support the Lead Member in their role.
- g) Keep under review the relevance of the role of the Lead Member in the context of the Council's Scheme of Members Allowance and if appropriate make a request for the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel to consider this.
- h) When appointments of Lead Members are made, to specify any additional protocol requirements that are not included within this protocol.

6) Internal Working Relationships

Committee Chairs and Councillors will:

- a) Acknowledge the right of Lead Members to be consulted on matters relating to their interest.
- b) Ensure where appropriate that there is engagement or consultation with Lead Members in the formulation of a policy or other matters and that the views of the Lead Members are contained in the information provided to decision makers.
- c) Take into account the views offered by Lead Members prior to any decision making on matters that clearly relate to the specific area of interest.
- d) Acknowledge and facilitate the right of Lead Members to attend Committees of which they are not a member in order to observe or to make representations.
- e) Attend relevant meetings where invited by the Lead Member(s) in order to receive updates or as a member of a working group.

Officers will:

- a) Acknowledge the right of Lead Members to be consulted and to participate in discussions on matters relating to their interest.
- b) Ensure there is appropriate engagement or consultation with all relevant Lead Members where the issue clearly relates to the interest.
- c) Co-operate fully with Lead Members in enabling them to perform their functions and to discuss directly with Lead Members and Councillors where proposed actions might prejudice Council or other priorities.
- d) Explain fully and openly to Lead Members any issues of capacity relating to the role of supporting the Lead Member function.
- e) Work with Lead Members in the formulation of a programme of activity that is consistent with what the Council wishes to achieve and recognises the right of the Lead Member to focus on other aspects.
- f) Consider inviting the relevant Lead Member to represent the Council at any relevant conference/seminar on the subject matter of the interest on the basis that they will report back to the Council.
- g) The Communications Team will contact the relevant Lead Member on matters relating to their specific area and will endeavour to include a quote on any matters relating to their specific area.
- h) Will signpost any appropriate external or internal training opportunities to support the Lead Member in their role.

7) External Working Relationships

The Lead Member will:

- a) Consider being the Council's representative on certain relevant external bodies after being requested by the Leader, Group Leader or Chief Executive.
- b) Monitor and work closely with partner bodies in relation to the specific area.
- c) Identify the most relevant community bodies whose work is associated with the interest and foster good working relationships with those groups.
- d) Take steps to promote within the wider community the specific issues on which the Lead Member is to focus and to provide opportunities for local engagement.