



# Ashfield

DISTRICT COUNCIL

# **Protocol for Use of Resources by Councillors**

Version x

Approved by Council [date]

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This protocol provides rules on the use of Council resources in relation to your role as a Councillor.

The Council provides a range of support services and facilities to enable Councillors to carry out their duties.

All Councillors must comply with the provisions of the adopted Members' Code of Conduct regarding the use of Council resources.

Council resources should be used exclusively for the purposes of Council business or to enable Councillors to carry out their Councillor role. Use of Council resources for political purposes can be a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Council resources includes, for example:

- IT;
- Telephones;
- Photocopiers;
- Stationery;
- Headed notepaper;
- Postage or use of the Council's postal system;
- Use of the Council's e-mail address;
- Transport;
- Staff time.

The rules regarding the use of these resources are set out in the **Schedule** attached to this protocol.

## 2. COUNCIL BUSINESS – WHEN THIS PROTOCOL APPLIES

Councillors may use Council facilities and resources in connection with the following Council business:

- Matters relating to the decision making process of the Council, e.g. Council, Cabinet and committee meetings
- Representing the Council on an outside body
- Holding ward surgeries
- Meeting, communicating with and dealing with correspondence from residents, other Councillors, officers, Government officials, MPs etc. in connection with Council business
- Matters for discussion by a political group of the Council, so long as it relates mainly to the work of the Council and not your political party or group

### 3. PRINCIPLES FOR USE OF RESOURCES

Councillors must be mindful of Council resources and must always seek to conduct business in the most cost effective way. Councillors must have regard to the need to ensure prudent and reasonable use of resources and value for money.

Party political activities or individual campaigning **do not** form part of Council business and the Council's resources **must not** be used for these activities. This includes Council email addresses. The Council is prohibited by law from publishing any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party or an individual Councillor.

Use of resources for the purpose of representing individuals or small groups of residents is acceptable. However, high volume use of resources including sending out circulars and conducting wide-scale consultation exercises is not acceptable, even though these may involve Council business.

In the interests of economy and the environment, Councillors are requested to use e-mail, or to hand-deliver, instead of using post wherever possible.

The Standards and Personnel Appeals Committee is responsible for oversight of use of resources including review of postage and photocopying costs incurred by individual Councillors and political groups. Committee is also responsible for considering requests for exceptions to be made. Committee reserves the right to charge Councillors for excessive use.

## **SCHEDULE**

### **EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES FOR COUNCILLORS**

#### **ICT Equipment**

- Each Councillor is provided with appropriate equipment for their full term of office. This currently consists of an ipad tablet device and keyboard.
- Cabinet Members may request a 3GM monthly data limit on their tablet devices. Cabinet Members are required to meet the costs of any usage above those limits.
- On receipt of equipment, Councillors are required to confirm that they have read the Councillors' ICT Acceptable Use Guidance.
- Support for technical matters is supplied by the Council's ICT helpdesk.
- User training is available on request.
- Councillors are required to return the supplied equipment if they cease to be a Councillor or at the end of their full term in office.

#### **Councillors' Webpages**

- The Council's Website includes contact details, photograph, committee memberships and attendances for each Councillor.

#### **Security pass**

- Each Councillor is issued with a photo security pass which should be worn at all times when in the Council Offices.
- Each card is individually programmed to provide access to particular areas in the Council building.

Each card is also programmed to enable Councillors to scan, copy and print from the Multi-Function Devices situated around the Council building.

#### **Arrangements for incoming mail**

- Each Councillor has a pigeonhole/post tray located within relevant group areas, or within Democratic Services, for Council paperwork and any mail sent to you at the Council Offices.
- Mail should be collected regularly.
- If Councillors are not expected to be at the Council Offices for some time they should discuss their specific requirements with Democratic Services.

## Arrangements for outgoing mail

- In the interests of economy, Councillors are encouraged to use email or hand-deliver mail where possible.
- Councillors who wish to send outgoing mail by post should hand the mail to Democratic Services.
- The Council's pre-printed window envelopes **must** be used in order to enable mail to be processed in accordance with the Council's contractual arrangements with Royal Mail.
- Unless there are exceptional circumstances, postage will be sent second class.
- Councillors should be economical in their use of post; volume use (anything in excess of 25 items) is not acceptable unless approved in advance by the Service Manager, Democratic and Scrutiny Services.

## Stationery

- A limited range of stationery is available from Democratic Services.
- Stationery must not be adapted to include political logos.
- The Multi-Function Devices are regularly re-stocked with printer paper; you should contact Democratic Services to re-stock if necessary rather than taking paper from other locations in the building
- Electronic versions of Councillor letterheads are available via Democratic Services on request.

## Printing

- Photo security passes enable Councillors to print, scan and photocopy from the Multi-Function Devices located around the Council Offices including in the Members' Room. These are the only printing facilities available.
- Councillors should be economical in their use of print.
- Due to the high costs associated with colour printing, Councillors should always print/copy in black and white unless colour is required to enable the document to be understood.
- Each Councillor has a monthly, pre-set print limit of £10.

## **Business Cards**

- Councillors can request a supply of 250 business cards via Democratic Services.

## **Room Hire for Constituency Surgeries**

- Councillors should seek to use meeting rooms that do not incur a charge to the Council if they wish to hold constituency surgeries. These can include community facilities and some Council premises. Democratic Services can help you identify a suitable venue.
- If no suitable premises are available free of charge an application for the cost of hiring an alternative venue will need to be approved by the Service Manager, Democratic and Scrutiny Services.

## **Conferences, Seminars and Training**

- Attendance at conferences, seminars and training events for which a fee is payable or which will incur mileage or subsistence claims must be approved in advance by the Service Manager, Democratic and Scrutiny Services in accordance with the Members Development Policy and the Members' Allowance Scheme.

## **Clothing**

- Members may occasionally be required to wear Council clothing such as Council branded coats, high visibility items or other protective clothing when attending events or outside locations. In these circumstances, appropriate clothing will be supplied by the Communications Team and must be returned immediately after the event/photoshoot.