



# Ashfield

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DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

**Version:**

**Approved by Council:**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This protocol provides rules on the use of Council resources in relation to your role as a Councillor. The key principle underlying this protocol is that public office and public resources should not be used to further purely private or party-political purposes.

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. Failure to comply with the rules set out within this protocol is likely to result in a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

- 1.2 As set out within the Members' Code of Conduct, as a Councillor, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the Council:
- 1.2.1 You act in accordance with the Authority's reasonable requirements including the requirements of the Authority's ICT policy.
- 1.2.2 You make sure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes unless that use could reasonable be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the Authority or of the office to which you have been elected or appointed.
- 1.2.3 You have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.
- 1.3 You may be provided with resources and facilities by the Council to assist you in carrying out your duties as a Councillor. Examples include:
- Office support
  - Stationery
  - Equipment such as phones, computers
  - Transport
  - Access and use of local authority buildings and rooms
- 1.4 These are given to you to help you carry out your role as a Councillor more effectively and not to be used for business or personal gain. They are to be used in accordance with the purpose for which the have been provided as set out within this Protocol.

1.5 The rules regarding the use of these resources are set out in the Schedule within this protocol.

## 2. WHEN THIS PROTOCOL APPLIES

2.1 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, 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

3.1 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.

## **SCHEDULE**

### **4. IT EQUIPMENT**

- 4.1 Each Councillor is provided with appropriate equipment for their full term of office. This currently consists of an iPad tablet device and keyboard.
- 4.2 On receipt of equipment, Councillors are required to confirm that they have read the Councillors' ICT Acceptable Use Guidance.
- 4.3 Technical support for the ICT equipment provided to Councillors by the Council is available through the Council's ICT helpdesk.
- 4.4 IT user training is available on request.
- 4.5 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.

### **5. COUNCILLOR WEBPAGES**

- 5.1 The Council's website includes contact details, photograph, committee memberships, attendance information, political affiliation, and register of interests.

### **6. SECURITY PASS**

- 6.1 Each Councillor is issued with a photo security pass to be worn at all times when in the Council Offices.
- 6.2 Each card is individually programmed to provide access to particular areas in the Council Offices.
- 6.3 Each card is programmed to enable Councillors to scan, copy, and print from the multi-function devices situated around the Council Offices.

### **7. COUNCIL BUILDINGS AND ROOMS**

- 7.1 Council buildings and rooms should only be used for the purpose of carrying out your role as a Councillor in relation to Council business.

This includes:

- Dealing with casework
- Meeting constituents or local partners
- Preparing for and attending Council meetings
- Meeting with Council Officers

## **8. INCOMING MAIL**

- 8.1 Each Councillor has a pigeonhole/post tray located within relevant group areas, or within the Democratic Services Office, for Council paperwork or any incoming mail received by the Council.
- 8.2 Pigeonholes/post trays should be checked and items within collected regularly.
- 8.3 If Councillors are not expected to be at the Council Offices for some time, they should discuss any specific requirements with Democratic Services.

## **9. OUTGOING MAIL**

- 9.1 In the interests of economy, Councillors are encouraged to use email or hand-deliver mail where possible.
- 9.2 Councillors who wish to send outgoing mail by post should hand the mail to Democratic Services.
- 9.3 The Council's pre-printed windowed envelopes **must** be used in order to enable mail to be processed in accordance with the Council's contractual arrangements with Royal Mail.
- 9.4 Unless there are exceptional circumstances, outgoing mail will be sent second class.

## **10. STATIONERY**

- 10.1 A limited range of stationery is available from Democratic Services.
- 10.2 Stationery must not be adapted to include political logos.
- 10.3 The multi-function devices are regularly restocked with printer paper, Democratic Services should be contacted to re-stock, if necessary, rather than taking paper from other locations in the Council Offices.
- 10.4 Electronic versions of Councillor letterheads are available from Democratic Services.

## **11. PRINTING**

- 11.1 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.

- 11.2 Councillors should be economical in their use of print.
- 11.3 Due to the 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.
- 11.4 Each Councillor has a monthly print limit of £10, which is refreshed on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month.

## **12. BUSINESS CARDS**

- 12.1 Councillors can request a supply of 250 business cards through the Council's Communications Team.

## **13. CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND TRAINING**

- 13.1 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 – Scrutiny and Democratic Services in accordance with the Members Development Policy and Members' Allowances Scheme.

## **14. CLOTHING**

- 14.1 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, as set out within the Council's Provision of Corporate Clothing and Personal Protective Equipment Policy:

*"Members will be provided with appropriate corporate clothing and PPE on an 'as needs' basis as required by the particular circumstances and duties/functions being undertaken. All items of corporate clothing and PPE issued to Members shall be returned to the Council upon completion of the relevant duty/function. This can be flexible, including single event use or longer-term use, such as a Member's term of office, as deemed appropriate."*

- 14.2 Council branded clothing must not be worn for political campaigning or personal activities. Council branded clothing must only be worn at Council arranged events/photoshoots in relation to Council business.