

# Members' Handbook

## Members' Handbook Index

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## Welcome from the Chief Executive

Firstly, welcome to North West Leicestershire District Council. Some of you may be new members with this election. Some of you will have previously been members of this authority and fairly familiar with the council, other members and officers.

To assist with your introduction into your new role I thought that it would be useful for all members to receive a copy of the members' handbook.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with an overview of the information which you will need in order to carry out your duties as a District Councillor. More information can be found on the Member's Room page on the website [www.nwleics.gov.uk/membersroom](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/membersroom)

The handbook has also been provided in an electronic format so that you can add to it during your term of office enabling you to keep a living file of relevant information. Updates will also be issued where necessary.

I hope that you find this handbook useful and I look forward to continuing to work with all members in progressing this Council through its journey of improvement.



**Christine E. Fisher**  
Chief Executive

## Pride in the Community

The wellbeing of people in North West Leicestershire is improved

### **WE WANT TO ENSURE...**

- Residents feel safe in their community
- Residents live healthy active lifestyles
- Residents have pride in communities where they feel they belong

## Improving our Town Centres

Our Town Centres are better places to live, work and visit

### **WE WANT TO ENSURE...**

- Businesses choose to locate in our Town Centres
- People want to spend time in our Town Centres

**North West Leicestershire will be a place where people and businesses feel they belong and are proud to call home**

Council's Vision Statement

## Green Footprints Challenge

People feel proud to be part of a greener district

### **WE WANT TO ENSURE...**

- Businesses are motivated to be greener
- Residents are inspired to live a greener lifestyle
- People feel that the Council demonstrates community leadership

## Value for Money

People feel Council services provide good value for money

### **WE WANT TO ENSURE...**

- Customers are happier with services provided
- People feel the Council is spending money well

## **The Local Community and Your Role**

The local community relies on its Councillors and the local community can view your role in the following ways:

- You are the elected representatives of the whole community within the ward you serve.
- People who are from inside the local community know what is best for that community. They understand the issues and pressures and can offer solutions that best serve the community.
- As a voice within the local community Councillors can champion the users of local services.
- The effective function of democracy is a key factor within a local community and Councillors are seen as key to having effective democracy.
- Councillors play a very important role in helping to shape future services for the benefit of the local people. There are a number of guides which have been produced to help you understand the new roles and responsibilities for Councillors.

## **Your Basic Responsibilities as a Councillor**

By law, you must:

- Attend legally, at least one Committee or Council meeting every six months (however, it is expected that you would attend every Council and committee meeting you have been assigned to).
- Declare, and take appropriate steps to acknowledge the existence and nature of personal and prejudicial interest at meetings.
- Comply with the Member Code of Conduct and other related protocols.
- Observe and keep to your Council's Member/Officer Protocol and other protocols that may exist, e.g. in relation to communication with the press.
- Keep confidential information confidential.
- Register all gifts received – see section on gifts and hospitality.
- Register under the Data Protection Act.

## General Responsibilities for Councillors

- At all times ensure the highest standards of ethics and conduct are maintained.
- Balance the different interests within your ward and represent the needs of all people within the ward and the District and not just those people who voted for you or who are known to you.
- Become an advocate of and for your constituents by representing your constituents and bring their views into the Council's decision making process.
- Undertake casework such as representing an individual or a family at special appeals, perhaps related to housing benefit or school admission.
- Contribute to the good governance of the area and actively encourage community participation and citizen involvement in decision-making.
- In all outside activities be an ambassador for the Council and always act in a professional way to reflect the best possible standards.

## Doing Your Job Effectively

A Councillor is able to provide to the community a service as they see best and it will be up to the Councillor to decide how they devote their time, energy and effort to provide this service, however there are a number of key fundamental areas that must be considered.

In order to provide a high standard of service a Councillor must:

- Participate effectively as a member of any panel, committee, forum, community Council or assembly, to which they are appointed.
- Plan and manage their time effectively to ensure objectives/targets are achieved.
- Be available and approachable to all of the constituents within their ward (either via a surgery or some other arrangements). They should respond to requests for assistance from their constituents within a reasonable time frame and keep them informed of the progress of inquiries.
- Represent the Council to the community and the community to the Council.

## **Committee Skills and Etiquette**

### **Know Your Committee**

- Read the 'Terms of Reference' and list of members before your first meeting.
- Make sure you have attended any requisite training before your first meeting.
- Familiarise yourself with the deadlines for questions and motions.

### **Be Prepared**

- Read the papers early so that you have time to clarify things before the meeting.
- Submit your questions/motions in good time.
- Ask your Local Member Support Officer for copies of old minutes/papers for background information, if necessary.
- Attend any necessary briefings
- If you cannot attend a meeting, give your apologies to the relevant officer as soon as you become aware.
- Seek any legal advice on interests BEFORE the meeting.
- Check the agenda for when and where the meeting is being held and make sure you're on time.

### **Committee Etiquette**

- Get the attention of the Chair by making eye contact or raising your hand/pen to have your turn to speak.
- Stand when speaking, if able to do so.
- Use the microphone, if there is one.
- When voting ensure that your hand is clearly visible so your vote can be counted.
- Ask the questions you'd like answered: be assertive but try not to interrupt, be too pushy or rude.
- Try not to look too bored or use a phone/laptop. Turn off your mobile phone.
- Don't be intimidated; make the most of the opportunities to have your say.

### **Getting your point across**

- Think through your arguments, don't repeat too much and speak clearly.
- Back up your arguments with evidence of what your constituency thinks to add weight where needed.

### **Follow Up**

- You can ask questions in 'matters arising', if appropriate, to see what's been done (or not ) on previous actions.
- Feedback to your constituency if you're representing it on a committee.

## Protocol on Member and Officer Relations

The purpose of this document is to provide a guide to good working relationships between Officers and Members of the Council.

Members are elected to make decisions in the interests of the District and to represent their constituents. Under the Council's Executive Arrangements, Members perform roles on the Cabinet, the Policy Development Group and on Committees and sub-committees in addition to sitting as Members of the Council. Each Member of the Executive is a Portfolio holder, responsible for particular areas of activity. Some Members represent the Council on outside bodies.

Officers are employed by and serve the whole Council. They advise the Council, its Committee and Sub-Committee and the Cabinet. They implement decisions of the Council, the Cabinet and decision making groups. Officers also make decisions under powers delegated to them.

Officers are responsible to their Team Manager and, ultimately their Head of Service. Heads of Service and the Director of Services are accountable to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive is accountable to the whole Council. Some senior officers have specific statutory responsibilities, including the Chief Executive, as the Head of Paid Service.

Other officers also hold statutory posts such as

- Section 151 Officer (also the Head of Finance) – who has responsibility for financial management and probity
- Monitoring Officer (also the Head of Legal and Support Services) - who has statutory responsibility for ensuring that the decisions/actions of the council are lawful and not likely to give rise to maladministration.

The Director of Services, Heads of Service and Team Managers have responsibility for delivering their respective services in accordance with the Council's Policies and the provisions of the Council's Constitution.

The full protocol can be found in the Council's Constitution.

## Member Support

Throughout the course of your term of office you have a dedicated Council Officer to assist you with your role as a Councillor who will be your initial contact for any inquiries. There are three Local Member Support Officers covering each of the three community areas, who are your first point of contact within the Council for any assistance you require in your role as a Councillor. There are also three Community Team Leaders who you can contact regarding issues within your community areas.

To ensure that you receive the best attention, please contact the relevant officer below in the first instance.

<p>Ashby, Measham and Moira Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appleby</li> <li>- Ashby Castle</li> <li>- Ashby Holywell</li> <li>- Ashby Ivanhoe</li> <li>- Measham</li> <li>- Moira</li> <li>- Oakthorpe and Donisthorpe</li> <li>- Ravenstone and Packington</li> </ul>	<p>Michelle Terry Local Member Support Officer 01530 454787 <a href="mailto:michelle.terry@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">michelle.terry@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Balwinder Bahia Community Team Leader 01530 454567 <a href="mailto:balwinder.bahia@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">balwinder.bahia@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Coalville Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bardon</li> <li>- Coalville</li> <li>- Greenhill</li> <li>- Hugglescote</li> <li>- Ibstock and Heather</li> <li>- Snibston</li> <li>- Thringstone</li> <li>- Whitwick</li> </ul>	<p>Clare Hammond Local Member Support Officer 01530 454529 <a href="mailto:claire.hammond@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">claire.hammond@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Tony MacRory-Smith Principal Community Team Leader 01530 454760 <a href="mailto:tony.smith@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">tony.smith@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Valley Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Breedon</li> <li>- Castle Donington</li> <li>- Kegworth and Whatton</li> <li>- Valley</li> </ul>	<p>Rachel Wallace Local Member Support Officer 01530 454530 <a href="mailto:rachel.wallace@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">rachel.wallace@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Wendy Jones Community Team Leader 01530 454769 <a href="mailto:wendy.jones@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">wendy.jones@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p>

## Accessing Council Services

### Visiting the Council Offices

If you are planning to visit the Council Offices, please report to reception who will contact the relevant Officer or alternatively will guide you to the Member Services Office on the first floor.

Members are given a proximity security badge to enable them to access the 'Staff Only' areas of the Council Offices. The badge will have your photograph affixed to it and members are asked to wear their badge at all times when in the building. The Council Offices are locked at 8pm Monday to Thursday and at 6pm on Fridays. If there is a meeting then the offices remain open until the meeting is concluded.

Please note that, once a week, the fire alarm is tested. This alternates between a Monday and a Thursday morning. There is no need to evacuate the building unless the alarm tells you to. Should an emergency arise and you do need to evacuate the building please ensure that you use the nearest fire exit and then congregate on the car park at the rear of and away from the building.

### Accommodation

At the Council Offices, a resource centre will be provided on the first floor of the older part of the building, near to the Council Chamber. In the resource centre you will find hard copies of agendas, limited publications and reference material.

### Accessibility

If you require it, a hearing loop can be provided to you for use in the Council Chamber. Just make the Local Member Support Officer aware of your needs prior to the commencement of the meeting. Once we are aware we will put a loop out at your desk for each meeting you attend. At the end of the meeting please leave the loop at your desk and we will collect it. Please do not take hearing loops away from the Council Offices.

### Car Parking

The car parks at the Council Offices are pay and display during office hours. You can purchase a ticket at the machine each time you visit the Council Offices, or alternatively, members may purchase an annual car parking pass. Please contact your Local Member Support Officer for further details.

### Surgeries

Provision for surgeries at Council premises can be arranged subject to availability. Please contact your Local Member Support Officer for assistance.

### Schedule of Meetings

Details of all forthcoming meetings are available on the Council's website. A list of current meeting dates for the forthcoming year can be found at the end of this section for your reference.

## **Agenda and Committee Reports**

All members will receive hard copies of the papers that will be considered at the meetings on which they sit. For all other committees, the papers are available on the Council's website.

If you wish to look at confidential reports and you are not a member of the committee, you will need to request a copy from your Local Member Support Officer and you may need to sign a register held by the Monitoring Officer stating why you need to see the confidential report.

## **Printing and Stationery**

Business cards, headed notepaper and compliment slips may be obtained on request from your Local Member Support Officer.

Photocopying and printing services are available; depending on the nature of the material, a charge may be made. Ask your Local Member Support Officer for more details.

## **Members Post**

You can collect your mail from your pigeon hole which is situated behind main reception at any time during office hours. All non-urgent mail will be posted weekly if not collected. Any urgent mail, including agendas, will be posted to members separately.

## **IT**

All members will be provided with a North West Leicestershire email account for use in their role as a councillor. Your Local Member Support Officer will issue you with a RSA security token to enable you to access this facility, and will ask you to sign up to the IT security policy. The full policy can be found in the Members Room on the Council's website.

## **Broadband Connection**

The Council has agreed to pay 50% of the rental of a home broadband connection. Payment is made automatically, thus no claim is required. However, before payment can be made you will need to supply an original invoice from your provider to the Council. Please send this to your Local Member Support Officer.

## **Members Bulletin**

Each Friday, members will receive a weekly members bulletin by email. This useful resource will contain important information for members, and will give details of events that are coming up and meetings for the forthcoming week.

## **Council Website – The Members Room**

An area specifically for Councillors has been created on the Council's website. This will be maintained by the Local Member Support Team and will contain general information to help you in your role as a councillor. You can visit the Members Room at:

<http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/membersroom>

## Schedule of Meetings

### May 2011 – May 2012

#### Council (6.30pm)

Tues, 24 May 2011 (Annual Meeting)  
Tues, 28 June 2011  
Tues, 27 September 2011  
Tues, 8 November 2011  
Tues, 24 January 2012  
Thurs, 23 February 2012  
Tues, 27 March 2012

#### Planning Committee (4.00pm)

Tues, 7 June 2011  
Tues, 5 July 2011  
Tues, 2 August 2011  
Tues, 6 September 2011  
Tues, 4 October 2011  
Tues, 1 November 2011  
Tues, 6 December 2011  
Tues, 10 January 2012  
Tues, 14 February 2012  
Tues, 6 March 2012  
Tues, 3 April 2012  
Tues, 1 May 2012

#### Grants Review Working Party (6.30pm)

Wed, 1 June 2011  
Mon, 18 July 2011  
Mon, 17 October 2011  
Mon, 23 January 2012

#### Cabinet (4.00pm)

Tues, 14 June 2011  
Tues, 26 July 2011  
Tues, 18 October 2011  
Tues, 15 November 2011  
Tues, 13 December 2011  
Tues, 17 January 2012  
Tues, 7 February 2012  
Tues, 13 March 2012

#### Licensing Committee (6.30pm)

Wed, 15 June 2011  
Wed, 7 September 2011  
Wed, 23 November 2011  
Wed, 21 March 2012

#### Audit & Standards Committee (6.30pm)

Wed, 29 June 2011  
Wed, 28 September 2011  
Wed, 14 December 2011  
Wed, 28 March 2012

## **Members' Allowances Scheme – A Brief Overview**

### **Basic Allowance**

All members are entitled to a basic allowance which is intended to recognise the time devoted by councillors to their work inclusive of time spent on meetings with constituents etc and incidental costs for which other provision is not made. The basic allowance also covers attendance at Council meetings as listed in the full scheme document.

### **Special Responsibility Allowance**

Members who undertake a special responsibility, for example Leader of the Council or Chairman of the Planning Committee, are entitled to a further allowance, which is known as a 'Special Responsibility Allowance', in addition to their basic allowance.

### **Pension**

All Councillors are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme.

### **Payments**

Payments of the basic and special responsibility allowances are made in instalments of one twelfth of the amount specified in the scheme on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of each month.

Claims for payment of attendance allowances and travelling expenses must be received by the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the month in order to be paid on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of that month and should be submitted regularly each month.

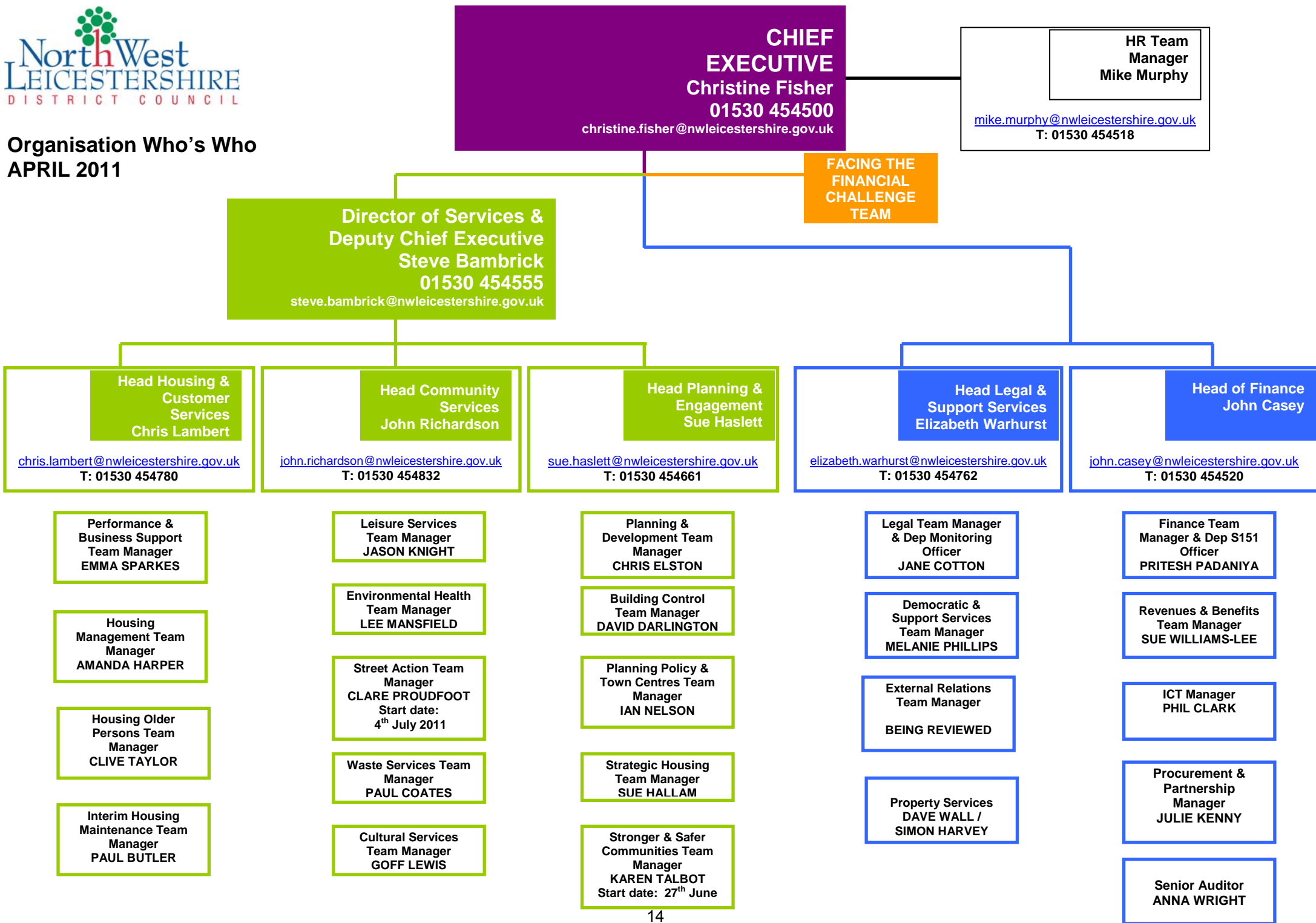
Forms for claiming attendance allowances and travelling expenses may be obtained from your Local Member Support Officer.

### **Expenses**

Members are allowed to claim back any expenses incurred in travelling to 'approved duties'. Examples of the forms for this purpose are available from the Members Room on the Council's website, or are available on request from your Local Member Support Officer.

Full details of the Members Allowance Scheme can be found on the Council's website, in the Members Room.

**Organisation Who's Who  
APRIL 2011**



## The Council's Constitution

The North West Leicestershire District Council has a constitution which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose. The Constitution contains 16 articles in Part 2 which set out the basic rules governing the Council's business. More detailed procedures and codes of practice are provided in separate rules and protocols at the end of the document.

You can download a copy of the constitution on the Council's website – visit the Members Room at [www.nwleics.gov.uk/membersroom](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/membersroom)

A hard copy is available on request from your Local Member Support Officer.

## **Registration of Financial and Other Interests**

Within 28 days of election or appointment to office (if that is later) a member must register his financial interests in the council's register by providing written notification to the Council's Monitoring Officer. Any subsequent amendments must also be notified in writing to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the change in circumstance occurring.

Full details of this requirement are can be found in the Council's Constitution.

## **Gifts and Hospitality**

Within 28 days of receiving any gift or hospitality over the value of £25, members must provide written notification to the Council's Monitoring Officer of the existence and nature of that gift or hospitality.

Members should always take care when deciding whether or not to accept a gift or hospitality, particularly where they are a member of the Planning Committee. It is very important that members behave in such a manner as to avoid giving the impression that they may be biased in any way. For explicit details regarding the procedure to be followed in the event of an offer of a gift or hospitality in this situation please refer to the Planning Code of Conduct.

## **Data Protection and Freedom of Information**

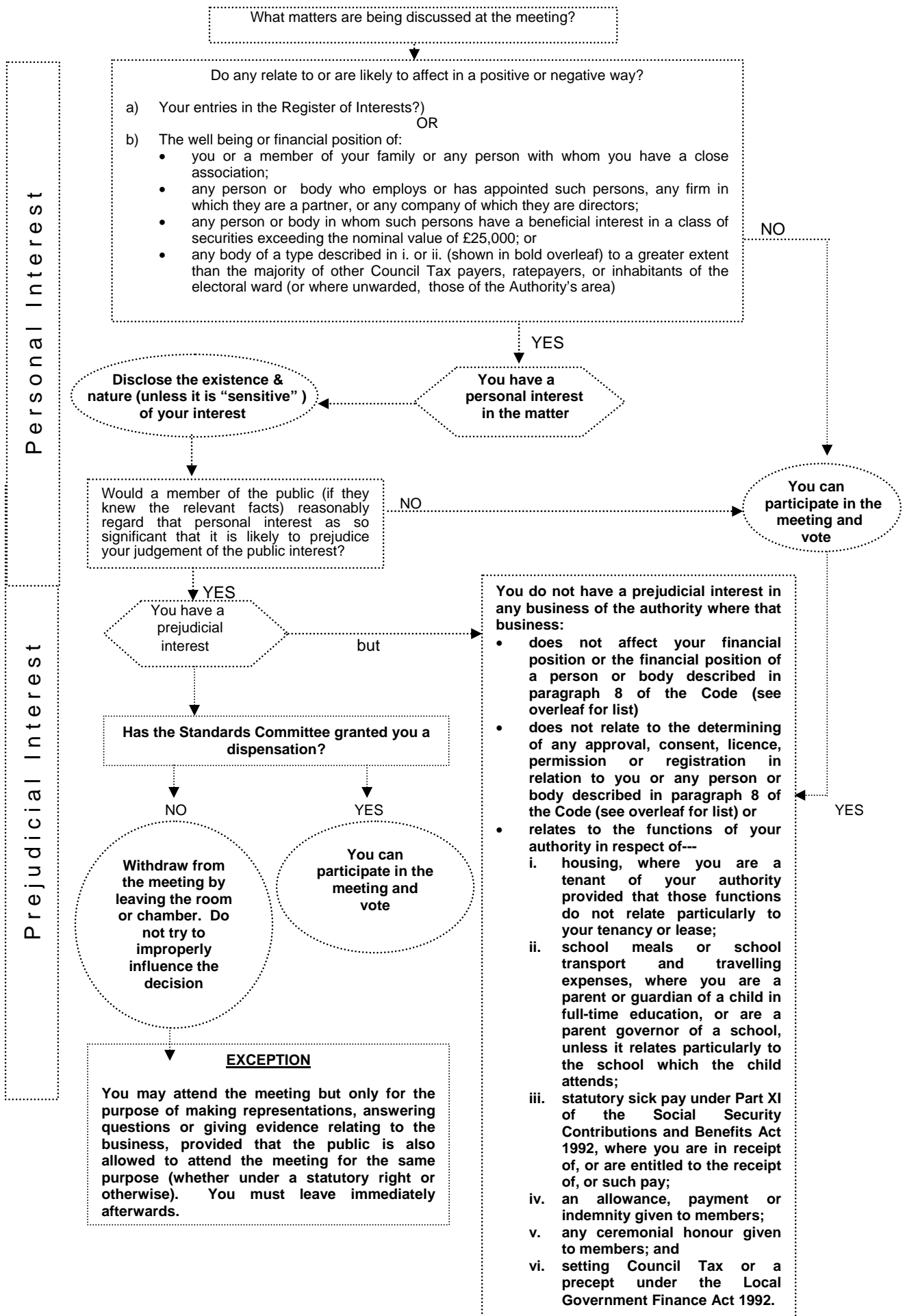
As a Councillor you will be undertaking casework within your ward and as such will likely keep a record of your constituents' personal information.

There are laws governing the storage and use of personal information and the following pages give an overview of the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

Guidance for elected members and a self –assessment guide which you can use to determine whether or not you will need to be registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) can be found on the website in the Members Room.

The ICO has a website with full details on this subject and online registration forms. Please visit [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk).

# DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

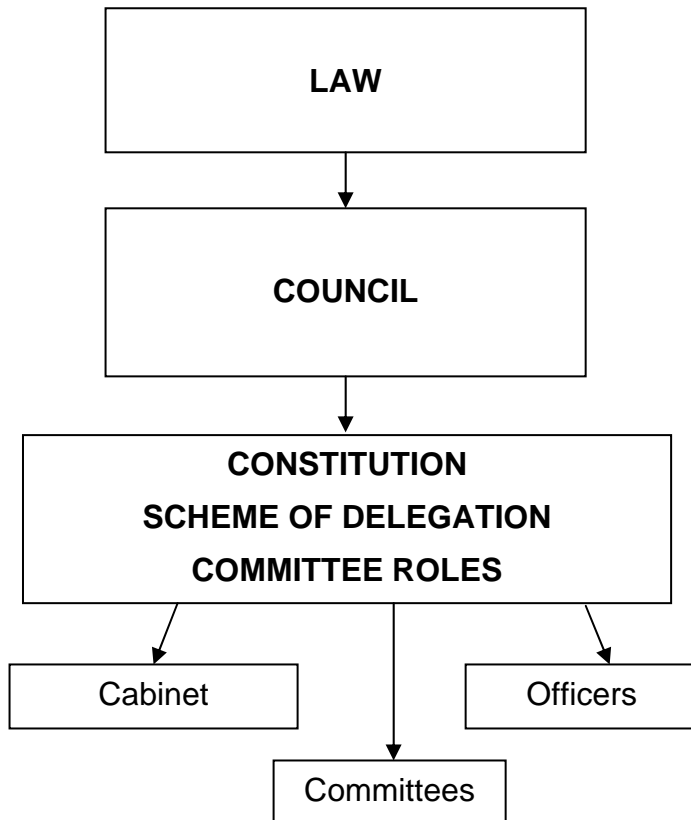


## Overview of the Decision Making Framework

Decision making at the Council is done by the various committees appointed by the Council or Officers under delegated powers.

The Council keeps a list of which part of the Council or individual has responsibility for particular types of decisions or decisions relating to particular areas or functions. This record is set out in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.

All decisions of the Council must be taken in accordance with the 'Principles of Decision Making' as set out in Part 2, Article 13 of the Council's Constitution.



- Council can only do work it has legal powers/duty to do.

- All legal powers/duties come to the Full Council as a body

- The law requires that some decisions are Executive Functions
- Some decisions are capable of delegation to officers
- Full Council agrees these delegations by approving the scheme of delegation and the roles of committees

### SCRUTINY (Policy Development Group)

- Supports the work of Cabinet and Full Council
- Acts as a 'watchdog' to ensure executive decisions are taken in accordance with the policy framework

## The Forward Plan

The Law requires every Council to keep and publish a list of 'Key Decisions' which will be taken at Cabinet Meetings . This list is known as the 'Forward Plan' and belongs to the Leader of the Council.

Where the Council intends to take a 'Key Decision' it must first have been published on the forward plan.

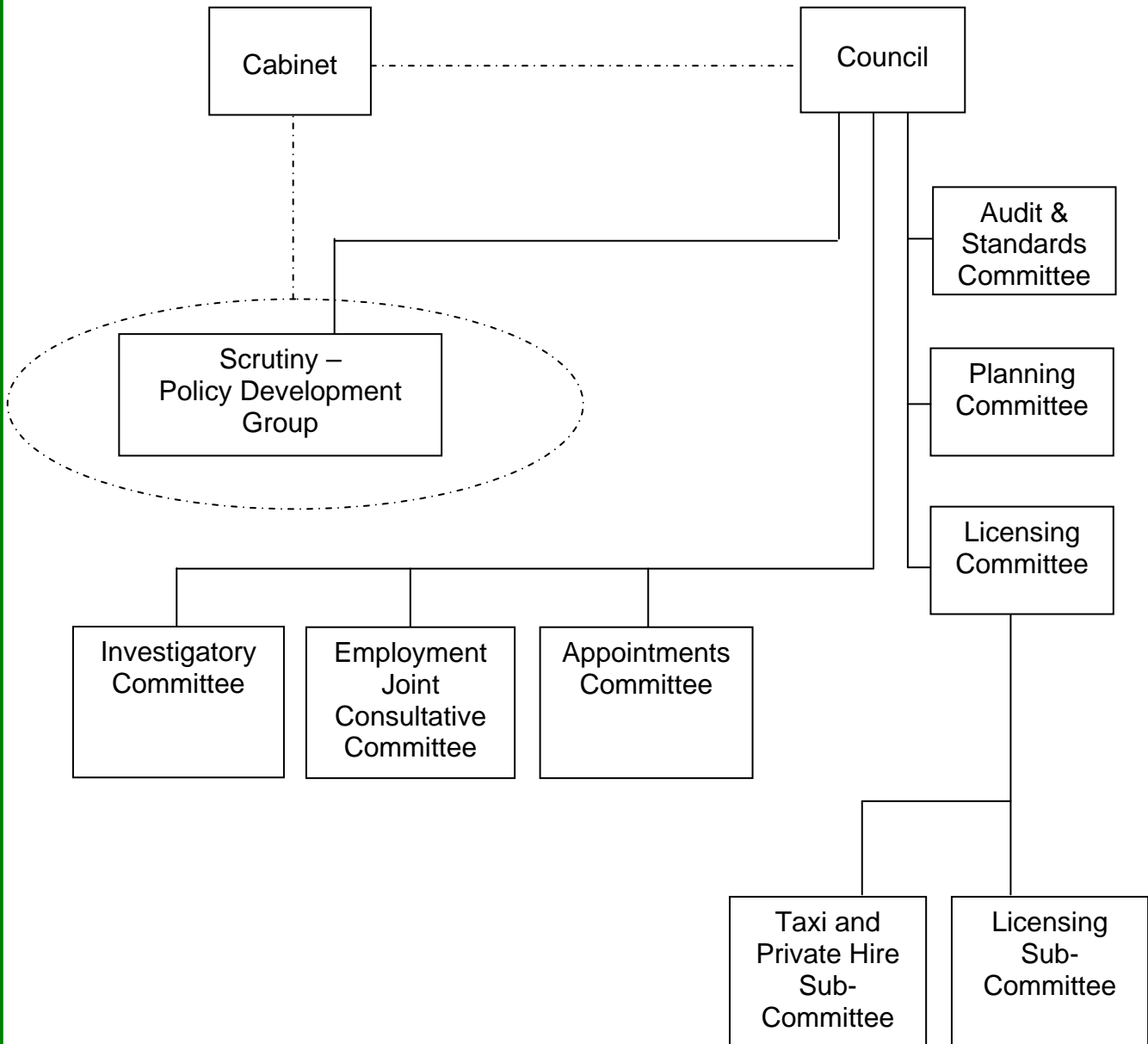
The forward plan is a document which is published annually and then updated thereafter on a monthly basis. The forward plan covers a period of 4 months beginning with the first day of any month and will be produced at least 14 days before the first day on which the plan will come into effect.

Full details on what constitutes a 'Key Decision' and detailed information about the 'Forward Plan' can be found in the Council's Constitution.

The 'Forward Plan' is a good way to check what the Cabinet will be considering at its future meetings. You can view the forward plan on the Council's web site in the Members Room.

If you would like further information please contact your Local Member Support Officer.

## Committee Structure



Further information regarding the responsibilities and functions of the Committees can be found in part 3 of the Constitution.

## Overview of the Training Programme

Event	Who should attend?	Content	Date, Time & Location
Annual Meeting of the Council	All members	Appointment of the Leader of the Council  Appointment of the Chairman & Deputy Chairman of the Council  Appointments to Committees	Tuesday, 24 May 2011 6.30pm Council Chamber
Standards & Code of Conduct training	Requirement for all new members  Recommended for all members	Code of Conduct  Gifts and Hospitality  The Register of interests	Wednesday, 25 May 2011 6.30pm Council Chamber
Planning Training	Requirement for all members and Substitutes of the Planning Committee	Role of Member of Local Planning Authority  Role of Officers of Local Planning Authority  Planning Code of Conduct  Declaration of interests  Lobbying  Contact with applicants,	Wednesday, 1 June 2011 9.00am Council Chamber – All Day

Event	Who should attend?	Content	Date, Time & Location
		<p>developers and objectors</p> <p>Public Speaking at Meetings</p> <p>The life of a planning application from submission to determination</p> <p>What happens on the day of Planning Committee</p> <p>Planning Committee reports</p> <p>Decision making by Planning Committee – material and non material planning considerations and associated risks</p> <p>Our Place/Building for Life</p> <p>Site visits to look at some examples of good and bad practice</p>	
Licensing, Taxi and Gambling Act Training	Requirement for all members and substitutes of the Licensing Committee	<p>General Principles of each Act</p> <p>Role of Members</p> <p>Ward Member Role</p>	<p>Wednesday, 8 June 2011 6.30pm Council Chamber</p>

Event	Who should attend?	Content	Date, Time & Location
		Licensing Objectives	
Audit & Standards Training	Requirement for all members of the Audit and Standards Committee	Audit & Governance Risk Management Statement of Accounts Complaints about Councillors – role of committee, sub-committee structure, the future of the standards regime Oversight of Governance Issues	Tuesday, 14 June 2011 6.30pm Council Chamber