

Ponthir COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Protocol on Member and Officer Relations

Mutual trust and respect between Councillors and Officers are essential to ensure good governance and the effective running of the Community Council. To help ensure that relationships do not go awry this policy has been introduced to cover: -

- The respective roles and responsibilities of the Councillors and the Community Council Clerk.
- Relationships between Councillors and the Clerk.

1. Background

- 1.1 This protocol is intended to assist Councillors and the Clerk in approaching some of the sensitive circumstances which arise in a challenging working environment.
- 1.2 The reputation and integrity of the Community Council is significantly influenced by the effectiveness of Councillors and the Clerk working together to support each other's roles.
- 1.3 The aim is effective and professional working relationships characterised by mutual trust, respect and courtesy.

2. Roles of Councillors and the Clerk

- 2.1 The respective roles of Councillors and the Clerk can be summarised as follows:

Councillors and the Clerk are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one and other, but their responsibilities are distinct. Councillors are responsible to the electorate and serve only so long as their term of office lasts. Clerks are responsible to the Community Council. Their job is to give advice to Councillors and to the Community Council, and to carry out the Council's work under the direction and control of the Council and relevant committees if any.

2.2 Councillors

- 2.2.2 Councillors have four main areas of responsibility:

- To determine council policy and provide community leadership.
- To monitor and review council performance in delivering services.
- To represent the council externally.
- To act as advocates for their constituents.

- 2.2.3 All Councillors have the same rights and obligations in their relationship with the Community Council Clerk, regardless of their status or political party, and should be treated equally.

- 2.2.4 Councillors should not involve themselves in the day to day running of the Council. This is the Clerk's responsibility, and the Clerk will be acting on instructions from the Council, within their agreed job description.

2.3 Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees

Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs have additional responsibilities. These responsibilities mean that their relationships with the Clerk may be different and more complex than those of other Councillors. However, they must still respect the impartiality of Officers and must not ask them to undertake work of a political nature, or to do anything which would prejudice their impartiality.

2.4 Officers

The role of the Clerk is to give advice and information to Councillors and to implement the policies determined by the Council.

In giving such advice to Councillors, and in preparing and presenting reports, it is the responsibility of the Clerk to express his/her own professional views and recommendations. The Clerk may report the views of individual Councillors on an issue, but the recommendation should be the Clerk's own. If a Councillor wishes to express a contrary view, they should not pressurise the Clerk to make a recommendation contrary to their professional view, nor victimise the Clerk for discharging his/her responsibilities.

3. Expectations

3.1 Councillors can expect:

- A commitment from the Clerk to the Council as a whole, and not to any individual Councillor, group of Councillors or political group.
- A working partnership.
- Understand and support respective roles, workloads and pressures.
- A timely response from the Clerk to all emails, enquiries and complaints.
- The Clerk's professional advice must not be influenced by political views or personal preferences.
- Regular, up to date, information on matters that can reasonably be considered appropriate and relevant to their needs, having regard to any individual responsibilities or positions that they hold.
- The Clerk ensures all sensitive information is kept confidential.
- Respect, courtesy, integrity and appropriate confidentiality from the Clerk is always maintained.
- Maintain training and development opportunities to help everyone carry out their roles effectively.
- Not to have personal issues raised outside the council's agreed procedures.
- The Clerk will not use their contact with Councillors to advance their personal interests or to influence decisions improperly.
- The Clerk will at all times comply with the agreed Council code of conduct.

3.2 The Clerk can expect from Councillors:

- a working partnership.

- An understanding of, and support for, respective roles, workloads and pressures.
- Leadership and direction.
- Respect, courtesy, integrity and appropriate confidentiality.
- Not to be bullied or to be put under undue pressure.
- Councillors will not use their position or relationship with the Clerk to advance their personal interests or those of others or to influence decisions improperly.
- Councillors will always comply with the council's adopted Code of Conduct and will respond promptly to all communication from the Clerk.

Clare Danaher Clerk Ponthir Community Council October 2024