



# Model Protocol on Member/Officer Relations

## Mumbles Community Council

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

- The respective roles and responsibilities of Councillors and the Chief Officer, and any other staff employees.
- Relationship between Councillors and Officers;

## **Background**

This protocol is designed to support Councillors and the Chief Officer in addressing some of the sensitive situations that arise in a challenging working environment.

The reputation and integrity of the Community Council are greatly affected by how well Councillors, the Chief Officer, and other staff collaborate to support each other's roles.

The aim is to establish effective and professional working relationships characterised by mutual trust, respect, and courtesy. Close personal familiarity should be avoided.

## **Roles of Councillors and Employees**

The respective roles of Councillors and employees can be summarised as follows:

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

## **Councillors**

Councillors have four primary 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; and
- To act as advocates for their constituents

All Councillors have the same rights and obligations in their relationship with the Chief Officer and other employees, regardless of their status or political party and should be treated equally.

Councillors should not involve themselves in the day-to-day running of the Council. This is the Chief Officer's responsibility, and the Chief Officer will act on instructions from the Council or its committees, within an agreed-upon job description.

## **Chairs of Committees**

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

## **Officers**

The role of Officers is to provide advice and information to Councillors and to implement the policies set by the Council.

When giving advice to Councillors and preparing and presenting reports, it is the Officer's duty to express his or her own professional views and recommendations. An Officer may include the opinions of individual Councillors on an issue, but the recommendation should originate from the Officer's own judgment. If a Councillor wishes to express a contrary view, they should not pressure the officer to make a recommendation that conflicts with the Officer's professional opinion, nor victimise an officer for fulfilling their responsibilities.

## **Expectations**

All Councillors can expect:

- A commitment from Officers to the Council as a whole, and not to any individual Councillor, group of Councillors, or a political group.
- A working partnership
- Officers should understand and support their respective roles, workloads, and pressures.
- A timely response from Officers to enquiries and complaints.
- Officer's professional advice, not 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 they hold.
- Officers to be aware of and sensitive to the public and political environment locally.
- Respect, courtesy, integrity and appropriate confidentiality from Officers
- Training and development opportunities to help them carry out their role effectively.
- Not to have personal issues raised with them by Officers outside the Council's agreed procedures.
- That Officers will not use their contact with Councillors to advance their interests or to influence decisions improperly.
- The Officers will at all times comply with the relevant code of conduct.

Officers 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 be put under undue pressure
- That Councillors will not use their position or relationship with officers to advance their interests or those of others or to influence decisions improperly;
- That Councillors will always comply with the Council's adopted Code of Conduct

### General Principles

- Close personal relationships between Councillors and Officers can confuse their separate roles and get in the way of proper conduct of Council business, not least by creating a perception in others that a particular Councillor or Officer is getting preferential treatment.
- Special relationships with individuals or party political groups should be avoided as they may create suspicion that an employee favours that Councillor or political group over others.