**The Role of the Community Councillor and Community Council Officer Bearers**

The role of the community councillor is to represent the views of the community. This means not offering personal views and opinions on local issues or taking decisions that are based on self-interest. The role involves discussing issues with people in the community to clarify their views and assess the strength of their feelings on different topics. When representing members of the community on a particular interest, a community councillor must check out the facts of the situation before taking matters to the Community Council. There are two sides to every story, so make sure that both sides are put forward. There is little point in taking up time at meetings to discuss problems that are based simply on misunderstandings or misrepresentations of the facts.

At some point it may be that you will find some conflict between your own personal views and interests and those of the community that you are representing. If such a situation does arise, try to make sure that the views of the community take precedence. Experience shows that if the views of individuals on the Community Council are allowed to take priority then the community will very quickly lose confidence in the Community Council and its work may subsequently be devalued.

In some instances, it may be necessary and appropriate to declare an interest in the matter under discussion and to withdraw from that debate and decision-making.

The task of any Community Council is to identify the needs and aspirations of its community and to take decisions that will lead to appropriate action in that community. At some point this might involve setting priorities on the competing or conflicting needs of different sections of the community.

Competition and conflict are normal in any community, so you shouldn’t think of them as something that can be altogether avoided. What is important is that you approach competition or conflict in a fair and reasonable manner. This means taking a balanced view of your community’s needs and aspirations and giving a fair hearing to representatives from different interest groups in your community. In particular, you should try to avoid being influenced by prejudice or bias, whether in the sphere of race, religion, gender or any other of the "labels" which get attached to people and to local issues.

**The Role of Office Bearers**

Each Community Council must have a Chairperson, a Treasurer and a Secretary – the office bearers – and these roles carry the most responsibility. The office bearers, as elected members representing their local communities, are responsible for the efficient and effective operation of the Community Council working within the local authority’s Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils. All members of the Community Council are equally responsible for the Community Council’s decisions and actions and may take on additional activities in support of the Community Council.

The Chair is elected in accordance with the rules set out in the Community Council’s own Constitution. The chairperson is responsible for ensuring that discussions are productive whilst adhering to the agenda, that meeting runs to time and that clear action points are set.

In regular meetings the role of the Chair is a formal one, all speakers will be expected to address their comments to the Chair. This helps the Chair to keep control of the discussion. In Committee meetings, where proceedings need not be so formal, the Chair may be content simply to steer the general direction of the discussion – this may be described as an enabling role. The extent to which a Chair adopts one or the other of these will be dependent upon the circumstances at a particular time or occasion.

Perhaps most importantly of all, the Chair is expected to know the rules by which the Community Council functions and to ensure that at all stages of its work the Community Council is operating in accordance with any procedures that are set down. In this context the Chair may be called upon to act as an arbiter when there is a disagreement about how the rules should be interpreted.

It is important to recognise that the Chair’s role extends outwith the meeting itself. The Chair may be called upon to act on behalf of the Community Council between meetings, or to represent the Community Council in dealing with outside bodies. This role may also be delegated by the Community Council to other office bearers or members.

The Role of the Vice Chair is to stand in for the Chair when unable to attend a meeting and often the Vice Chair is the next “Chair in waiting”.

The Secretary ensures the smooth running of the Community Council by organising online or in person meetings, booking venues, setting the agenda and keeping minutes and records. The secretary also ensures effective communication between the Community Council and members of the public, the media and local authority officers.

The Treasurer is responsible for maintaining the Community Council’s financial records, making payments on behalf of the Community Council and any charities and/or funds dispersed by the Council. This includes managing the bank account, ensuring money is only spent in a manner approved by the Community Council members as recorded in the minutes.

The Treasurer ensures that any financial transactions are signed by two persons authorised by the Community Council members as recorded in the minutes and notified to the bank in writing. It is good practice to have more than two authorised signatories, in the event of someone being unavailable at short notice. The Treasurer must keep proper accounts of all receipts and expenditure and prepare an Annual Statement of Accounts. Councils should use an independent, external examiner to approve the accounts. This need not be a professional accountant but should be someone who has some relevant knowledge and experience of finance.

Another key role for the Treasurer is reporting and answering any questions raised by members of the Council or the public on the Statement, which must be formally approved at the next AGM. When the Statement is certified and approved, it should be sent to the local authority as part of the process of applying for the annual administration grant. The standard form of words for the Treasurer’s Certificate is: ***“I certify that the above accounts have been prepared by me and accurately reflect the financial provisions relating to the period …..”***

(At this point the Treasurer would add their own relevant information about the accounting period.)