

Article 2 - Members of the Council

2.1 Composition and eligibility

(a) Composition

The Council will comprise 46 members, otherwise called Councillors. The Borough is divided into 16 wards, and each ward (except Mapledurham) is represented by three Councillors. Mapledurham Ward has only one Councillor. One Councillor is elected each year by the voters of each of the 15 wards of the authority. This is called election by thirds.

(b) Eligibility

Only registered voters of the Borough or those living or working there will be eligible to hold the office of Councillor.

2.2 Election and terms of Councillors

The ordinary election of a third of all Councillors will be held on the first Thursday in May in each year. In 2004, as a result of ward boundary changes, there were all-out elections for all seats in all wards, with three Councillors being elected for each ward except Mapledurham.

The Councillor elected for Mapledurham ward was elected to serve for four years, retiring in May 2008. The terms of office of the Councillors for the other 15 wards were determined by the number of votes received by each Councillor in the ward. The Councillor who received the smallest number of votes in the 2004 elections served for two years, and stood down in May 2006. The process continued until 2008, with the Councillor receiving the largest number of votes in the ward serving for four years, and standing down in May 2008. The Councillors elected in the elections on May 2006 onwards have each been elected for four years. There were no local elections in 2009, and there will be no local elections in 2013 and every four years thereafter.

2.3 Roles and functions of all Councillors

(a) Key roles

All Councillors will:

- (i) collectively be the ultimate policy-makers, set the Council's budget and Council tax, and carry out a number of strategic and corporate management functions, through full Council;
- (ii) act as community advocates and leaders by:
 - promoting and representing the Borough and the local communities and bringing their views into the decision-making processes of the Council and partner agencies;
 - being the advocate of and for their ward and local people and communities living within it, including responding to petitions;
 - providing information to, and promoting local democracy, participation and engagement by, sections of the local community
 - working with partners and other agencies to address issues that are beyond the Council's direct control

- (iii) deal with individual casework and act as an advocate for ward residents in resolving particular concerns or grievances;
- (iv) balance different interests identified within the ward and represent the ward as a whole;
- (v) be involved in decision-making as provided by the Constitution, including:
 - executive decisions by Lead Councillors through Cabinet
 - regulatory and quasi-judicial decisions on individual planning and licensing applications;
 - decisions affecting personnel matters and staff appointments
 - appeals
 - scrutinising executive decisions and their implementation, holding Lead Councillors to account, and providing an overview of policy formulation and development
 - scrutinising the delivery of public services in Reading by partner organisations, and holding their decision-makers to account
- (vi) be available to serve as the Council's representative on partnership bodies, appointee or nominee on outside bodies, and on school governing bodies;
- (vii) maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics.

(b) Rights and duties

- (i) Councillors will have such rights of access to such documents, information, land and buildings of the Council as are necessary for the proper discharge of their functions and in accordance with the law, and as specified in the Council's Protocol on Member:Officer Relations (see Part 5 of the Constitution)
- (ii) Councillors will not make public, information which is confidential or exempt without the consent of the Council or the subject of the information, or divulge personal information or information given to them in confidence to anyone other than a Councillor or officer entitled to know it without consent.
- (iii) For these purposes, "confidential" and "exempt" information are defined in the Access to Information Rules in Part 4 of this Constitution, the Protocol on Member:Officer Relations(Part 5 of the constitution) and by the Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(c) Skills and Competencies

A) Skill Framework for Councillors

The Improvement and Development Agency (I&DEA) and the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) have developed a Councillor competency framework which sets out the key areas where Councillors need skills in order to undertake their diverse roles. These areas are:

- (i) Local leadership
 - Councillors will engage enthusiastically and empathetically with the community in order to learn, understand and act upon issues of local concern
 - Councillors will mediate fairly and constructively, and encourage trust by representing all sections of the community
- (ii) Political understanding

- Councillors will act ethically, consistently and with integrity when communicating values or representing group views in decisions and actions
- Councillors will work across group boundaries without compromising values or ethics

(iii) Partnership working

- Councillors will build positive relationships by making others feel valued, trusted and included, and by working collaboratively to achieve goals
- Councillors will maintain calm and focused, recognise when to delegate or provide support, and will be able to take a long-term view in developing partnerships

(iv) Scrutiny and challenge

- Councillors will act as a critical friend by seeking opportunities for scrutiny and providing constructive feedback
- Councillors will analyse information quickly and present arguments in a concise, meaningful and easily accessible way

(v) Communication

- Councillors will listen sensitively, use appropriate language and check for understanding
- Councillors will communicate regularly with individuals and groups in the community, speak clearly and confidently in public, and make sure that people are informed

(vi) Regulatory and monitoring work

- Councillors will understand and execute their quasi-judicial roles by following protocols, evaluating arguments and making decisions that balance public needs and local policy
- Councillors will ensure progress by monitoring and intervening where necessary.

B) Skill Framework for Executive Councillors (Cabinet Members)

(i) Provide vision

- Lead Councillors will create a shared Council vision by establishing strategic policies and prioritising actions
- Lead Councillors will actively encourage the involvement of others in policy formulation and work collaboratively to analyse information and promote understanding
- Lead Councillors will be open to new ideas and ways of doing things

(ii) Manage performance

- Lead Councillors will work closely with others to develop, promote and achieve objectives and represent the Council at a strategic level
- Lead Councillors will encourage scrutiny, monitor performance and respond positively to feedback and ideas

(iii) Provide excellence in leadership

- Lead Councillors will provide visionary and charismatic leadership, be well prepared, be able to trouble-shoot and to juggle conflicting responsibilities
- Lead Councillors will work to shape a culture of excellence by acting as the public face of the Council and a role model for others
- Lead Councillors will encourage cooperation and communication across political and Council boundaries

C) Competencies

The Council supports the competency framework for Councillors developed by the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU), as follows:

- Communication
 - Demonstrate excellent communication skills
 - Able to present information clearly and persuasively across different audiences and media contexts - eg Council meetings, Cabinet, Committees, Scrutiny Panels, consultative and advisory panels, and as community leaders
- Strategic Thinking
 - Able to develop a clear vision of the future incorporating wide-ranging environmental issues and long-term thinking
- Strategic Financial Management
 - Able to understand financial information and create well-estimated budgets
 - Able to understand the Council's Financial Regulations and scheme of delegation
- Leadership
 - Demonstrate the capacity to lead and motivate others
 - Demonstrate understanding of and commitment to raising ethical and probity standards
- Negotiation and Conflict Resolution
 - Able to deal with conflicting demands and situations using negotiation processes to define common ground for agreement
- Risk Management
 - Able to analyse risks and assess the potential impact on the Council, community and environment
- IT Skills
 - Able to understand IT strategies and use IT systems to assist their role of Councillor

D) Development

The Council will provide training and development opportunities for Councillors to develop these skills and competencies in the following areas:

- Core skills
 - Induction training (mandatory for all new Councillors)
 - Time management
 - Stress management
 - Presentational skills
 - Chairing and meeting skills
 - Public speaking
 - Personal development action planning
 - Continuing professional development
- Conduct and Governance
 - Induction training (mandatory for all new Councillors)
 - Scrutiny training
 - Planning and Development Control (mandatory for members of Planning Applications Committee)
 - Licensing (mandatory for members of the Licensing applications Committee)

- Recruitment and Selection (mandatory for Councillors taking part in selection processes)
- Equality Awareness
- Ethics and Conduct
- Decision-making
- Leadership
 - Performance management
 - Budget management
 - Risk management
 - Health & safety
 - Racist incident reporting
 - Facilitation
 - Giving feedback
 - Coaching
 - Mentoring

2.4 Conduct

Councillors will at all times observe the Members' Code of Conduct, the Planning Code of Conduct, the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations, and the Protocol on Council Publicity and Elections, as set out in Part 5 of this Constitution.

2.5 Allowances

Councillors will be entitled to receive allowances in accordance with the Members' Allowances Scheme set out in Part 6 of this Constitution.

2.6 Membership

The names and addresses of Councillors by ward, for the current Municipal Year, are attached.

JGP
3rd draft
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