
PROTOCOL ON RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN POLITICAL GROUPS, ELECTED MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Report by Acting Chief Executive

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

25 August 2022

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for a Protocol on Relationships between Political Groups, Elected Members and Officers.**
- 1.2 The Councillors Code of Conduct, issued as required by the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000, sets out the conduct expected of every Elected Member in Scotland. To complement this, and to give further clarity to both Elected Members and Officers in this Council, a draft Protocol has been produced on Relationships between Political Groups, Elected Members and Officers.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Protocol is to guide Elected Members and Officers of the Council in their relations with one another; to develop co-operative relationships between Members; assist with Ward management; and provide a framework within which members of Political Groups within the Council are able to operate individually and collectively. The Draft Protocol is contained in the Appendix to this report.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Scottish Borders Council approves the Draft Protocol for Relationships between Political Groups, Elected Members and Officers contained in the Appendix to this report.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Councillors Code of Conduct, issued as required by the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000, sets out the conduct expected of every Elected Member in Scotland. To complement this, and to give further clarity to both Elected Members and Officers in this Council, a draft Protocol has been produced on Relationships between Political Groups, Elected Members and Officers.

4 DRAFT PROTOCOL ON RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN POLITICAL GROUPS, ELECTED MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

- 4.1 The purpose of the Protocol is to guide Elected Members and Officers of the Council in their relations with one another; to develop co-operative relationships between Members; assist with Ward management; and provide a framework within which members of Political Groups within the Council are able to operate individually and collectively. The Draft Protocol is contained in the Appendix to this report.

- 4.2 Elected Members and Officers need to have mutual trust and respect, with neither taking advantage of their position. To this effect, the Protocol covers a number of specific areas, although is not intended to cover every eventuality or situation:

- Officer advice to Party Groups
- Support services to Members and Party Groups
- Members' access to information and to Council documents
- Relationships between Officers and Chairs
- Correspondence
- Meetings of the Council and Committees
- Responsibilities of Elected Members
- Responsibilities of Political Groups
- Constituency matters
- Dealing with individual constituent's cases
- Dealing with Ward issues
- Dealing with Local Organisations
- Rights of Elected Members
- Rights of Political Groups
- Rights of Political Group Leaders

- 4.3 Details of dispute resolution, including a flowchart, are being drafted and this will be provided to Members and Officers in due course, as an addendum to the Protocol.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not have clarity on the relationships between Elected Members, Political Groups and Officers. It is anticipated that adopting this Protocol will help mitigate that risk.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

No Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out on the Protocol as it applies equally to all Elected Members and Officers, and it is therefore anticipated that there are no adverse equality issues.

5.4 Sustainable Development Goals

Adopting the Protocol will not have any direct impact on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

5.5 Climate Change

Adopting the Protocol will not have any direct impact on climate change.

5.6 Rural Proofing

There is no specific impact on the rural area from the proposals contained in this report.

5.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report. Sections 5, 12 and 13 of the Protocol make specific reference to data protection legislation.

5.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Acting Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director People Performance & Change, and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the report.

Approved by

David Robertson

Acting Chief Executive

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Background Papers: Nil

Previous Minute Reference: N/A

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jenny Wilkinson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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