

MEMBER ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

Frontline Councillor

Community leadership roles

As the democratically mandated local community leader, Frontline Councillors will engage different communities and bring local interests together to help resolve issues and shape future provision. In particular they will:

- be recognised as a local community champion and leader for the area, helping to provide direction, resolve local concerns and reconcile competing views and interests;
- encourage the involvement of local people in policy development, service planning and decision-making;
- be key members of any future action partnership;
- be responsible for the spending of budgets devolved for dealing with local matters and targeting resources effectively;
- promote effective relationships with public, private, voluntary and community organisations in their area;
- be the Council's link with existing town and parish councils and play a key role in supporting local campaigns or groups looking to establish new town and parish councils in their area;
- assist in brokering local agreements such as the local area charter or mini-LAA in which 'added value' service provision could be negotiated and agreed with service providers;
- monitor the performance of local public services in their area, hold poor performers to account and help plan improvements to local services;
- promote both the principles and practices of community cohesion, social inclusion and equality and diversity;
- keep in touch with constituents, through regular surgeries, meetings, phone, letter, e-mail and personal contact so as to know and understand their views and concerns;
- speak freely in support of their area in order to influence Council decision-making, including the consideration of issues such as planning and licensing;
- promote and contribute to the Council's vision for sustainable communities.

Corporate roles

As a member of the Full Council, the Frontline Councillor has a significant role to play, for example:

- agreeing the Council's overall mission, strategic aims, objectives and priorities;
- deciding on revenue and capital budgets and council tax levels;
- agreeing and reviewing the Council's Constitution;
- appointing committees and sub-committees;
- being involved in appointing the Council's Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive);
- promoting and preserving the integrity of the Council;
- representing the Council on other bodies;
- making, amending and revoking bylaws;
- making sure the Council meets its obligations as a corporate parent.

Frontline Councillors, will together be a key component in delivering the Council's regulatory responsibilities for such matters as highways, licensing and planning. In so doing they will:

- act fairly and judiciously;
- act in accordance with all relevant legislation;
- make reasonable decisions based on relevant matters, excluding irrelevant matters;
- ensure that local views and perspectives from area action partnerships and local town and parish councils were brought to the table;
- ensure proceedings were carried out in an open and transparent way.

As a member of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the Frontline Councillor will:

- play a major role in policy development and review;
- question the Executive's actions, decisions and assess the performance of the Council. Scrutiny members should use performance information to hold the Executive to account, allowing performance to be assessed from the perspective of customers and citizens;
- scrutinise the effectiveness and performance of partnerships e.g. CDRP, and partner organisations e.g. NHS in delivering measurable outcomes within the context of the County Durham Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement;
- scrutinise the performance as appropriate of the third sector (voluntary and community) as a service provider;
- respond to community calls for action where required;
- contribute to regional scrutiny arrangements as appropriate, such as NHS, regional agencies

Executive Councillor

- As a member of the decision-making Executive, an Executive Councillor will be responsible for making key decisions on a wide range of issues which affect and shape quality of life in the County. In particular they will:
- be a publicly recognisable and accountable 'key decision-maker' with whom the 'buck stops' for Council performance;
- collectively provide strong and fair executive leadership and clear political guidance to other Councillors and Officers;
- develop with partners a clear vision for what County Durham needs and develop policies and take decisions which respond to local peoples' needs and aspirations;
- take tough and strategically driven decisions on competing priorities;
- champion the vision and interests of the council and the County on the regional and national stage;
- be instrumental in building and nurturing local and thematic partnerships, leading and integrating the County Durham Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement Executive Board and related thematic partnerships;
- provide leadership and direction within the Council for designated portfolio areas;
- hold senior officers within the Council to account for the performance of services, allowing performance to be assessed from the perspective of customers and citizens;
- develop the financial and investment strategies to fulfil the Council's commitments to the sustainable community strategy for the County, working with partners in the public, business, voluntary and community sectors;
- ensure that there is proper support for Frontline Councillors in their various roles, responding to them when they raise issues and ensuring that their local knowledge is brought to bear when developing policy

Chairman of Council

The Chairman of the Council will:

- provide strong, fair and visible civic and ceremonial leadership to the Council and in relation to citizens, stakeholders and partners.
- attend or be represented at such civic and ceremonial functions as the Council or he/she determines appropriate.
- be an ambassador for the Council and the County, both at home and abroad
- promote public involvement in the Council's activities.
- uphold and promote the Council's Constitution and interpret the Constitution when necessary.
- preside over meetings of the Council so that its business can be carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of Councillors and the interests of the community.
- request such additional meetings of the Council as may be considered necessary or appropriate.
- ensure the Council meeting is a forum for the debate of matters of concern to the local community and a place at which Members who are not on the Executive can hold the Executive to account.
- be consulted on any matter in relation to which consultation with the Chairman of the Council is required under the Constitution.
- determine any matter referred to him/her under the urgency provisions of the Access to Information Procedure Rules or the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution.

Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council will:

- provide strong, fair and visible political leadership and direction to the Council and in relation to citizens, stakeholders and partners in the co-ordination of Council policies, strategies and service delivery.
- lead the Council's efforts to achieve its Mission for County Durham.
- lead in promoting the aims and core values of the Council.
- lead the development of local, regional, national and European policy and strategic partnerships.
- assume overall responsibility for guiding the development and formulation of corporate priorities and strategic policy direction and for presenting those policies to the Council and the wider community, acting as the principal political spokesperson on corporate and strategic issues.
- provide political guidance to the Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team on the implementation of the Council's priorities and objectives and revenue and capital budgets.
- Appoint Executive Councillors to form a Cabinet.
- chair and manage the business/work programme of the Cabinet, ensure a coordinated and coherent approach is taken to policy development and the delivery of services and also where relevant, and taking into account any advice from the Chief Executive, the Council's Monitoring Officer or Chief Finance Officer, ensure that proposals are made to the County Council for decision within appropriate timescales, and in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework of the Council and all legislative and procedural requirements.
- determine the frequency and timing of meetings of the Cabinet and placing items on its agenda as he/she thinks appropriate.
- ensure the development of effective corporate policies reflecting the Council's commitment to continuous improvement and co-ordinate the work of the Cabinet in:
 - developing corporate policies and programmes;
 - delivering high quality services to the people of County Durham;
 - monitoring performance;
 - preparing and monitoring revenue and capital budgets;
 - reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's organisation and management processes;

- developing policies to promote the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the County.
- delegate executive functions to any individual member of the Cabinet and establish protocols for consultation between Cabinet Members and Officers in such circumstances.
- ensure that decisions are taken properly, openly and, where appropriate, publicly and that key decisions are properly programmed and subject to effective public consultation.
- involve local people and communities in the business and activities of the Council as fully as possible.
- encourage scrutiny of the Council's policies and service delivery and the input to policy by all Councillors.
- ensure that Members are treated responsibly and responsively in representing their constituents.
- maintain and promote the highest standards of conduct in the Council's affairs and in the appointment of its staff.
- chair the Chief Officer Appointments Committee
- be consulted on any matter in relation to which consultation with the Leader is required under the Constitution.
- represent the Council at all levels, liaise with government and other relevant agencies where appropriate and act as the principal ambassador for the County Council in advocating and explaining its roles and functions and promoting it as a listening and accessible organisation.
- consider learning and development needs of all Members and arrange suitable briefing and learning opportunities to take place through appropriate mechanisms.

Chairman of a Committee

Committee Chairmen will:

- provide leadership and direction for the Committee.
- chair and manage the business of the Committee, ensuring effective engagement by all Committee Members.
- request such additional meetings of the Committee as may be considered necessary or appropriate.
- promote the role of the Committee both within and outside the Council.
- represent the Council and the Committee on relevant external bodies as required.
- guide Members through those functions delegated by the Council to the Committee.
- be consulted on matters of business between meetings.
- ensure that the Committee takes balanced decisions based on all relevant evidence, always with impartiality and fairness.
- ensure, where appropriate, that there is full consultation with and participation by all interested parties on issues to be considered by the Committee.
- ensure that Committee decisions are properly recorded with full justifications.
- liaise and consult with relevant officers wherever appropriate.
- consider learning and development needs of Members and arrange suitable briefing and learning opportunities to take place through appropriate mechanisms.

Vice-Chairman of a Committee

Committee Vice-Chairman will:

- provide a full deputising role in the absence of the Chairman.
- undertake specific tasks and responsibilities as requested by the Chairman.
- share and support in general the full workload range of the Chairman.
- work actively with the Chairman to co-ordinate the work of the Committee.

Corporate Parenting Panel Members

- to understand, accept and carry out the function of the Corporate Parent as outlined in the DfES guidance “if this were my child”. Specifically:-
 - Accept responsibility for children in the care of Durham County Council.
 - Make their needs a priority.
 - Seek for them same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.
- to ask appropriate questions to seek reassurance about the safety and wellbeing of such children.
- to ask questions about how well the County looks after these children through membership of formal systems such as Fostering and Adoption Panels.
- to work with officers in assessing the quality of care provided through processes such as Regulation 33 visits alongside independent officers.
- to assess the effectiveness of service delivery through receiving regular reports about a range of provisions as set out in the Corporate Parenting Panel’s Annual Business Plan.
- to promote the role of Corporate Parent amongst other Councillors.
- to raise any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of young people for whom there is a Corporate Parenting responsibility with appropriate officers and/or Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel.
- to work with relevant officers and members in ensuring the effective delivery of the Corporate Parenting Panel business.