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## County Councillor Role Profile

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As a democratically elected local representative, county councillors (or elected members) hold a unique position and have the potential to make a real difference to people's lives. Councillors provide a bridge between the needs and interests of their community and the responsibilities of the Council. They are expected to champion the interests of all who need or may call upon the services the Council is responsible for. Councillors enable the interests of local people to influence decision making and contribute to service planning but need to balance the needs of their local residents with the wider needs of all residents across the county.

### 1. Local role

A councillor's primary role is to represent the 12,000 or so residents in your division by engaging with them to understand issues of local concern, being an advocate for them and signposting when required. To fulfil your local role you will need to:

- Be accessible locally by offering various ways for your local community to get in touch with you, including hard to engage groups,
- Develop and maintain communication links through various means (such as through attending community events/meetings, holding surgeries, using social media and producing newsletters) to engage with your community, local businesses and community groups.
- Help to solve local issues (known as casework) in liaison with Council officers, partners and other organisations, signposting, managing expectations, offering alternatives and explaining what can/cannot be done as required.
- Be an advocate for the local community, including through visiting local community organisations.
- Be able to explain how Council policies and decisions impact your local community, how the community can influence change and keep them informed of changes/decisions taking place that affect them.
- Make the views of your local community known to the County Council at the appropriate time and through the appropriate channels.
- Gather and maintain an awareness of the performance of the County Council's services and those of its partners in the local community and take action to resolve issues and address performance issues as appropriate.

### 2. Strategic role

As one of the 70 elected members of the County Council, you are not only responsible for representing your division but you also have an overriding duty to the whole community of West Sussex, all of its 882,000 residents, local business and those who work in and visit the county. To fulfil your strategic role you will need to:

- Participate in the effective and responsible management of the County Council by contributing to or scrutinising its budget, strategies and policies, its commissioning activity and the services it delivers.
- Develop and maintain a good knowledge of Council services, functions and duties.

- Work in partnership with others and develop good working relationships with officers.
- Act as the County Council's representative on any outside bodies or organisations to which you are appointed by the County Council.
- Act as a corporate parent for children who are looked after by the Council, ensuring they are provided with the support that any good parents would give to their children and promoting their interests.

### 3. Expectations

You will need to:

- Dedicate adequate time to fulfil the role and attend all meetings you are expected to attend whenever possible.
- Carry out your duties in the public interest, equally, with respect for others and without discrimination, leading by example as defined by the [Nolan principles](#) and in accordance with the [Council's code of conduct](#).
- Register any interests as appropriate (including those of a spouse or live-in partner, where relevant).
- Provide the relevant documentation to enable a DBS check to be carried out (and as appropriate to the roles to which you are appointed).
- Participate in induction training and ongoing training and development to maintain your skills and knowledge. You will need to complete any mandatory training within the first year of your election.

### 4. Skills you will need to develop to be an effective councillor

- **Political Understanding:** Regardless of whether you have been elected to represent a political party or are independent, you will need to work across political boundaries when required whilst still maintaining your own political integrity. Through your local role you should aim to increase public engagement in local democracy.
- **Partnership working:** The County Council works collaboratively to achieve shared goals for the benefit of the residents of West Sussex. You need to be able to work proactively in order to build good relationships with others (e.g. across the tiers of local government). You also need to develop the ability to know when to delegate, provide support or empower others to take responsibility.
- **Regulating and monitoring:** You need to understand protocols and processes in place (e.g. as set out in the Council's Constitution), comply with these and ensure they are being followed by others, challenging when appropriate.
- **Scrutiny and challenge:** Scrutiny and challenge are an important day-to-day aspect of your role. To be effective in this you need to analyse information quickly, be able to ask challenging but constructive questions and present arguments that are concise, meaningful and easily understood.
- **Communicating:** You need to be able to identify appropriate ways of communicating with your community (including those who are vulnerable or hard to reach) and be able to speak confidently in public settings (e.g. in council and community meetings) using appropriate language and avoiding jargon.

**Reviewed by the Member Development Group October 2023**