

**Handout ~~Two~~: CiLCA Portfolio Topic One – Roles and Responsibilities****A good council:**

- plays a vital part in representing the interests of the communities it serves
- improves the quality of life of local people and the local environment
- influences other decision makers, for example, in planning matters
- delivers services to meet local needs
- is aware of the Government's intention to give more powers to parish and town councils
- achieves recognised standards of practice (formerly Quality Status)
- works with other groups in the community to develop the community and provide better services to the electors
- is not afraid to precept

**A good parish councillor**

- Effectively represents the interests of their ward or parish
- Does not make decisions/promises on their own
- Fulfils and enacts any statutory requirements of an elected member of the council
- Actively and constructively contributes to good governance
- Actively encourages community participation and citizen involvement in the work of the council
- Encourages people to take up their roles of active and engaged citizenship
- Knows and has contact with key local stakeholders
- Represents the council to the community, and the community to the council, using all appropriate means
- Is a channel of communication for the ward or parish and ensures constituents are informed of services available; decisions that affect them and the reasons for those decisions

- Develops and maintains a working knowledge of organisations (including principal councils) operating within the area which have an impact on the wellbeing of both the community and the council as a whole
- Deals with constituents' enquiries and representations fairly and without prejudice
- Carries out case work for constituents and represents their interests, or enables the constituents to take action to deal with the matter themselves
- Identifies and works with local 'hard to reach' and under-represented groups to ensure their views can be identified
- Contributes to the formation of the council's policies and plans by active involvement in council meetings, committees and working parties
- Undertakes appropriate training and development to help fulfil the requirements of the councillor role
- Acts as the council's representative on outside bodies, and reports on their activities
- Champions causes in the interests of the council's area and campaigns for improvement in the quality of life of those living in, working in, or visiting the area

#### **A good chairman:**

- Plans the meeting with the clerk and ensure that everything on the agenda is legal.
- Is well-briefed and fully prepared.
- Welcomes members, the public and any visiting speakers as they arrive.
- Checks there is a quorum (minimum number of members needed to make the meeting legal)
- Calls the meeting to order and declares it open
- Formally welcomes members, the public and visiting speakers to the meeting
- Introduces the standard items on the agenda – apologies, declarations of interest, confirmation of minutes of previous meeting
- Introduces the agenda items and ensures that all members know what they have to achieve and how they might do it

- Ensures that decisions are clear and made in a lawful manner
- Exercises an original (optional) and casting (mandatory) vote if votes are tied
- Encourages participation
- Stimulates an exchange of ideas and experience
- Ensures that all have a chance to express their views freely
- Keeps the members aware of objectives
- Maintains focus
- Guides and progresses discussion towards achieving the objectives
- Manages conflict
- Is fair and balanced
- Preserves order
- Enforces rules of procedure
- Rules on disputed matters
- Participates, but does not dominate!
- Asks questions
- Clarifies misunderstandings
- Corrects mistakes
- Rejects irrelevancies and stops the meeting going off on a tangent
- Co-ordinates the views of members
- Gives information if needed
- Summarises the meeting's views and conclusions and confirms what has been decided/voted on
- Listens and analyses the meaning and relevance of members' contributions
- Consults the clerk for clarification, information, and advice where necessary
- Plans, organises and controls discussion
- Develops harmonious relationships

- Motivates individuals by encouraging and rewarding their efforts and supporting them in difficulties

### **A good clerk:**

- Is the proper officer of the council in law
- Is a vital team member providing legal and financial advice and information to support the council's decisions
- Is responsible for the agenda; signs the agenda and decides how it is set out (often in consultation with the chairman).
- Encourages councillors to submit items for the agenda where relevant
- Writes the minutes as an accurate legal record of what was decided at the meeting and ensures that the minutes of the last meeting are confirmed and signed at the start of the next meeting
- Provides advice and administration, and implements council decisions
- May be a project manager, personnel director, public relations officer, finance administrator or Responsible Financial Officer (but not always)
- Is not just a secretary and is not at the beck and call of the chairman or other councillors; the clerk is answerable only to the council as a whole
- Can take decisions; legally councils can delegate decisions to clerks because they are professional and independent officers
- Works with councillors in the team to provide a service for the community

### **The council as a good employer:**

- Complies with the rules that protect employees and the council and gives employees the full protection of the law (whether they are full-time or part-time) including pay, pension rights and annual leave
- Act as a responsible employer at all times
- Avoids misunderstandings between a council and its employees
- Complies with the law and exercise good practice that protects employees from bullying or harassment and discrimination

- Recognises that the clerk is employed by the council and answers to the council as a whole while all other staff, although employed by the council, answer directly to the clerk who is their manager and responsible for their performance
- Ensures that all staff have a contract of employment
- Ensures that the clerk is paid (as a minimum) according to recommendations agreed by the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks.
- Has a grievance procedure to ensure that problems are handled properly if they arise
- Recognises that Health and Safety law protects employees (and councillors and members of the public)
- Has a training policy ensuring that the clerk (and other staff) are properly trained
- Creates a relationship with employees based on mutual respect
- Seeks advice from their clerk (who can refer to the Society of Local Council Clerks if a member), an experienced chairman or an adviser from the County Association

