

Chapter 5.5- Protocol for Member/Officer Relations

[Updated Council 29/01/14]

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This protocol is intended to guide members and officers of the Council in their working relations with each other. It is part of the Council's wish to uphold standards of conduct amongst councillors and officers.
- 1.2 A number of other documents also deal with standards of conduct for members and officers and lay down procedures for the proper conduct of Council business. These include:
- Local Government Act 2000
 - Localism Act 2011
 - The Council's Constitution, specifically:
 - The Code of Conduct for Members of the London Borough of Enfield (Section 5.1 of Part 5 of the Constitution)
 - The Code of Conduct for Officers (Section 5.4 of Part 5 of the Constitution).

For example, one of the general principles of the Code of Conduct for Members of the London Borough of Enfield states that..."(Members) should respect the impartial role of the authority's statutory officers and its other employees".

Equally, the Code of Conduct for Officers provides that Councillors should expect staff to contribute to proper and effective working relationships, to serve the Council as a whole, to maintain political neutrality at work and be seen to be impartial.

- 1.3 Councillors and officers are servants of the public and are indispensable to one another, albeit their responsibilities are distinct. Councillors are responsible to the electorate and serve only so long as their term of office lasts. Officers are responsible to the Council. Their job is to give advice to councillors and the Council, and to carry out the Council's work under its direction and control.

Mutual respect between councillors and officers is essential to good local government. However, over-close personal familiarity between individual councillors and officers can damage this relationship and prove embarrassing to other councillors and officers.

- 1.4 The protocol reflects the above principles, the Council's decision-making structure and the Local Government Act 2000 and Localism Act 2011 in relation to member conduct. It has also been written with the understanding that effective working relationships are required between councillors and officers to deliver the Council's objectives.

- 1.5 Whilst not covering every eventuality, it seeks to strengthen a good working relationship, to clarify possible areas of doubt and to offer advice as to how to deal with particular situations which might arise.
- 1.6 Whilst many of the situations which fall within this protocol will undoubtedly relate to councillors and senior officers, the same aspects of conduct apply to all employees.

2. Role of Councillors

- 2.1 All elected members have a right to professional, impartial and, if appropriate confidential advice from officers. They also have a right to expect officers to uphold and carry out the values of the Council and deliver policies within the agreed framework.
- 2.2 Councillors must abide by the Code of Conduct for Members of the London Borough of Enfield and the 10 principles that underpin this code, namely selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership, respect for others, duty to uphold the law and stewardship.
- 2.3 They must declare any special relationships with constituents (ie spouse, partner, civil partner, family members or persons with whom they have a close association or personal relationship) when dealing with Council officers. Although members are elected to represent the interests of their constituents, they should not seek special treatment for any individual or themselves.
- 2.4 Without prejudice to their individual rights, all members shall have regard to the advice given by the Council's Monitoring Officer and the Councillor Conduct Committee in the exercise of their functions and duties, and they shall assist the Monitoring Officer in any aspect of investigations.
- 2.5 The law and the Council's Constitution lay down rules for the appointment, discipline and dismissal of staff. Councillors must ensure that they observe these rules scrupulously at all times. If councillors are called upon to take part in the appointment of an officer, the only question they should consider is which candidate would best serve the whole council. Section 7 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 requires every officer appointment to be made on merit. They should not let their political or personal preferences or prejudices influence their judgement. They should not canvass the support of their colleagues for any candidate and they should resist any attempt by others to canvass them. They should report any such attempt to the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer.
- 2.6 The recruitment and management of Council staff are the responsibility of the Chief Executive and the Council's Management Board. Except in cases where members are involved in the recruitment process as governed by the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, it is not appropriate for members to involve

themselves in these issues or to refer to such matters in public meetings or to the press (e.g. disciplinary cases).

- 2.7 Any act on the part of a member against an individual officer, if intended to gain unfair advantage or influence unfairly that person's actions, thoughts or deeds, may be regarded as a form of bullying, intimidation or harassment.

3. Officer Advice to Political Groups

- 3.1 There is now a statutory recognition for political groups and they are a well-established feature of local government. Officers may be called upon to give information and advice to party groups as part of the political consideration given to an issue before it reaches the formal decision making Council body. Political sensitivity and awareness are therefore required, particularly from senior officers. All members have the right to seek advice in confidence from senior officers, without it being perceived by others that the officer's political neutrality is being compromised. Whilst in practice such officer support is likely to be most in demand from the party group in control of the Council, it is an important principle that such support is available to all political groups.
- 3.2 Information may, from time to time, be requested by the Opposition Group from officers on a confidential basis. Providing this is not unlawful, improper, or against the interests of the Council specifically or generally, officers should respect the confidentiality of these discussions. If a councillor wishes such a discussion to be in confidence, he/she should state that to the officer at the outset. If the officer feels able to keep that confidence, then the discussion can proceed on that basis. If however the officer feels that it would not be in the best interests of the Council to keep the matter confidential, then he/she should say so at the time. The member concerned can then decide whether or not to proceed with the discussion.
- 3.3 Officers must be allowed to give support honestly but in a way that does not compromise their political neutrality. They also have a right to have their professional views listened to and respected (if appropriate in confidence) – but not necessarily followed – unless failure to do so would give rise to illegal, unlawful or improper conduct or maladministration. They should not be asked to make recommendations they could not professionally support. They should not be asked to justify political decisions of the administration or to be involved in advising on party business. Officers should ideally not be present at those parts of the meeting when such business is in fact discussed.
- 3.4 Advice and information given to party group meetings by officers is no substitute to them (the officers) providing all the necessary information and advice to the relevant decision making body of the Council at the appropriate time.

- 3.5 Members may ask officers to draft papers, resolutions or amendments to be presented to meetings. Whilst it is quite in order for officers to advise on such wording (e.g. to ensure legality or accuracy) this should not be taken that the officer supports the proposal.
- 3.6 Officers may be asked to give advice and information at meetings where non councillors are present. In most instances, such people (unless co-opted to a Council body) will not be bound by the Code of Conduct for Members of the London Borough of Enfield, particularly in relation to declarations of interest and confidentiality. Therefore in such circumstances, officers may not be able to provide the same level of information as they would for a member only meeting.
- 3.7 Exceptionally, Health and Wellbeing Board members (both councillors and non-councillors) are bound by the Code of Conduct for Members of the London Borough of Enfield. Board membership includes officers and councillors as well as other health and voluntary sector representatives. All are treated as co-opted members and are subject to the Code. Officers who are full Board members will therefore be subject to both the Code of Conduct for Members and the Code of Conduct for Officers.
- 3.8 Officers must respect the confidentiality of any party group meeting they attend.
- 3.9 Officers must abide by the terms of the Code of Conduct for Officers in relation to working with councillors.
- 3.10 Officers have a line management relationship with the Chief Executive or their Director – not individual members, whatever office that member might hold.

4. Officers' Roles

- 4.1 Employees serve the Council as a whole. They must have a loyalty to all councillors, not just those of any political group and ensure that the rights of all councillors are respected.
- 4.2 Officers must at all times keep members fully informed about significant issues which affect their wards or bodies on which they represent the authority. This is fundamental to the Council's wish to enhance the representational role of councillors. For example, if the authority conducts a consultation exercise in the borough, relevant members, including ward councillors should be notified at the beginning of the exercise.

5. Public Meetings called by Individual Councillors/Party Groups

- 5.1 Individual members or political groups may wish to hold public meetings, as part of their ward councillor role or in relation to a particular issue. Publicity for such

meetings should clearly state the nature of the event and should not imply that it is a Council meeting.

- 5.2 Any request for an officer to attend such a meeting in their official capacity must be made through the Chief Executive, their Chief Officer or the Monitoring Officer. It will be for those officers to decide if such attendance is both possible and appropriate, in the light of officer availability and priorities.
- 5.3 Any officer attending such a meeting does so in his/her official capacity. They are politically neutral and their presence does not imply support for a particular political proposal or initiative.

6. Public Meetings involving MPs, other Elected Representatives and Election Candidates

- 6.1 Where at any time an officer is invited to attend any public meeting called by or involving MPs, other elected representatives (e.g. GLA Assembly Members) or prospective candidates, such an invitation should be directed through the Chief Executive, appropriate Director or Monitoring Officer who will consult the Leader or relevant Cabinet member.
- 6.2 In the period between publication of Notice of Election (or Referendum) and polling day, the Council, its Members and its Officers must be aware of special rules designed to ensure the political impartiality of all Council publicity and communication. This period is generally known as “purdah” and will apply in the area in which the election or referendum is being held, whether that be the whole borough or one ward.
- 6.3 The Monitoring Officer will issue specific advice on purdah in the run up to any applicable electoral event, which will take the form of that set out at Appendix A.
- 6.4 If an officer is invited to attend any such public meeting in the purdah period, officers will only attend if representatives of all candidates standing in the election have been invited to the meeting. The same provisions apply in respect of local and national referendums.

7. Respect and Courtesy

- 7.1 For the effective conduct of Council business, there must be mutual respect and trust in all dealings between members and officers. As detailed in paragraph 12(2)(b) of the Code of Conduct for Members, members should not exert undue influence or inappropriately use their position in their dealings with officers. It is accepted that in some cases, discussions will be robust and challenging. Such dealings must however be conducted with courtesy, civility and professionalism, with respect for differing views and for legal and professional guidance. The way

in which members and officers work together will affect the external perception of the Council overall.

- 7.2 If a member feels that they have not been treated properly by an officer, they may take the matter up with the relevant Director. If the issue remains unresolved, they may raise it further with the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer. A breach of the Officers' Code of Conduct could result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee concerned.
- 7.3 If an employee considers that they have been treated inappropriately by a councillor, they should raise the matter with their line manager or Director. The manager or Director will as appropriate discuss the matter with the member concerned or the party whip or group leader. If the matter directly relates to a group leader, the Chief Executive will be notified.
- 7.4 If the matter cannot be resolved it shall be referred to the Monitoring Officer who shall discuss the matter with at least one of the two independent persons to agree the most appropriate course of action within the Council's complaints procedure for Councillors.

8. Support Services to Members and Political Groups

- 8.1 The Council can only lawfully provide support services to members (e.g. stationery, typing, IT equipment, photo-copying etc) to assist them in carrying out their roles as councillors. Such support services must therefore only be used for Council business. They should never be used in conjunction with any party political campaigning activity or for private purposes unless with prior approval of the Monitoring Officer and full payment made to the Council.

9. Members' Access to Information and Council Documents

General

- 9.1 This part of the protocol should be read in conjunction with the Access to Information Rules in the Constitution and is without prejudice to rights members have to access information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 9.2 Members have a right to request such information, explanation or advice, as they may reasonably need to assist them in carrying out their duties as a councillor. When information is requested on behalf of a third party, it must only be provided if it would be made available to a third party, on request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 9.3 The test to be applied in relation to a member's right to information or Council document is set out in common law and relates to a "need to know" to perform

their duties effectively as a councillor. Members do not have a right to a “roving commission” to examine documents – mere curiosity is not sufficient. The question of “need to know” must be determined initially by the Director who holds the document(s) in question. Councillors should not seek to obtain information where they have a Disclosable Pecuniary, personal or other pecuniary interest in the matter. In the event of dispute, the matter should be referred to the Council’s Monitoring Officer.

- 9.4 For the purposes of this protocol, the term Council documents and information is applied very broadly and relates to that which is produced with Council resources. However, it should not be taken to include political documents / information.
- 9.5 Any information provided to a member must only be used for the purpose for which it was provided i.e. in connection with the proper performance of the councillor’s duties.
- 9.6 Members are encouraged to use the Members Enquiry (MEQ) System, which is the most effective way to obtain appropriate information as efficiently as possible. Using the system also ensures that monitoring of service provision can be undertaken.

Meeting Documents

- 9.7 Members in law have a legal right to inspect any Council document, which contains information relating to the business to be transacted at a formal Council body. This right applies irrespective of whether the councillor requesting the information is a member of the body concerned and extends to background papers as well as reports to that meeting. The right does not however automatically apply to Part 2 papers as defined within the Local Government Act 1972 *(as amended)* as exempt and confidential information. According to the law, the member asking for the information would be expected to justify the request in specific terms, demonstrate a “need to know” in order to perform their duties as councillors which is not outweighed by any public interest requiring non disclosure, However in Enfield, the practice is to make Part 2 reports available to all members.

Documents in the possession/control of the Executive

- 9.8 Under the Local Government Act 2000, any relevant document in the possession of (or under the control of) the Executive and which contains material relating to any business to be transacted at a public meeting of the Council, will be available for inspection by any member of the Council. If the meeting is a private one *(where the relevant notice has been given)* any relevant document will be available for inspection **after** the meeting or immediately, in the case of Executive decisions by individual members or officers, after the decision has

been taken. In the case of documents containing exempt or confidential information the requirements in section 9.3 above will apply. In addition Members will not be entitled to access any document (or part of it) that would involve the disclosure of advice provided by a political assistant or adviser.

Scrutiny

9.9 In addition, and subject to important exceptions (see paragraph 9.9.4 below) an Overview and Scrutiny Committee member will be entitled to a copy of a relevant document which:

9.9.1 is in the possession or under the control of the Executive

9.9.2 contains material relating to:

9.9.2.1 any business carried out a private or public meeting of the Council or one of its decision making bodies;

9.9.2.2 any decision taken by a relevant Cabinet member in accordance with the Executive arrangements; or

9.9.2.3 any decision that has been made by an officer in accordance with the Executive arrangements.

9.9.3 The Executive will be required to provide a copy of the document as soon as reasonably practicable and in any case no later than 10 clear days after the Executive has received the request.

9.9.4 The exceptions are where the information:

(a) contains exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972, unless that information is relevant to:

- Any action or decision that the member is reviewing or scrutinising;
- Any review contained in the scrutiny work programme

(b) would involve the disclosure of advice provided by a political assistant or adviser.

9.9.5 If the Executive decides that a scrutiny member is not entitled (for the reasons above) to the information requested then it must provide the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with a written statement setting out its reasons for that decision.

10. Confidentiality of Information and Reports

- 10.1 The Chief Executive and Directors have a responsibility to ensure that all reports presented to formal Council bodies are only classified as “exempt” where the statutory criteria within the Access to Information Act are met.
- 10.2 In certain circumstances (known as Part 2 restrictions) the Council may restrict the circulation of documents in accordance with the exemptions within the Access to Information Act and where it is considered by the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer that such disclosure could be seriously detrimental to the Council's interests, its employees or former employees, or that of a third party. The categories of information that might be restricted include:
 - 10.2.1 Where any disclosure of information would be unlawful
 - 10.2.2 Personal details of an employee, former employee or other third party
 - 10.2.3 Details of a contract or property transaction
 - 10.2.4 Legal or other officer advice in a contentious matter.
- 10.3 Members are reminded that they are supplied with Part 2 reports in their position of trust and must therefore not disclose that information – confidentiality must be respected. Any unauthorised disclosure of information could be a breach of councillor code of conduct.
- 10.4 The emphasis must be on producing as much information in the public part of the meeting as possible and restricting the “exempt information” to an absolute minimum. Where possible reports should be split between Part 1 (public session) and Part 2 (private session) so that only the minimum information is restricted.
- 10.5 Once a report has been issued as a Part 2 paper, and until such time as the relevant Council body or officer has had the opportunity to decide otherwise, councillors and officers must respect the confidentiality of the information. It is a betrayal of trust to breach such confidences. The wilful disclosure of such information by a member or an officer is likely therefore to be viewed as a breach of their respective codes of conduct.
- 10.6 The Council will respect the rights of members to access documents and information under the ‘need to know’ principle (see paragraph 9 above). However, members do not have an absolute right to every document. They must respect the confidentiality (where appropriate) of particular information in whatever form. To disclose information, knowing it to be confidential, is likely to be deemed a breach of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct.

- 10.7 In such cases, members may inspect the documents but not copy them. Arrangements for such inspection will be made by the Monitoring Officer at the time. The times during which members may inspect such documents will be as flexible as possible.
- 10.8 In addition Council has agreed separate arrangements for Cabinet in dealing with specific reports which deal with highly sensitive, exempt or confidential information, such as those identified in 10.2 above. These are referred to as “Super Part 2” but will only be used in exceptional circumstances (recognising members’ statutory and common law rights). Under this procedure:
- 10.8.1 the Chief Executive (in consultation with the Monitoring Officer), relevant Directors and Cabinet Member(s) will agree the instances where it is felt the disclosure of particular information will be detrimental to the Council’s interests, its employees or former employees and those of third parties;
 - 10.8.2 circulation of any Super Part 2 report(s) will be restricted to Cabinet members, the statutory officers and relevant Director plus any members in attendance at the meeting. These copies will be numbered and collected in at the end of the relevant meeting.
 - 10.8.3 there is a requirement for all members of Cabinet as well as the Leader of the Opposition Group (or nominated representative) to be briefed on the issue prior to its consideration by Cabinet along, when the issue has specific implications on their area, with relevant ward councillors.
- 10.9 The procedure recognises the additional rights given to members of scrutiny in terms of access to information so scrutiny members are able to request access to Super Part 2 reports, but only where clear reasons are provided and the issue is relevant to an issue under review or included on their scrutiny work programme. The Member concerned would need to understand and agree to respect the private and confidential element of the report and if appropriate may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. Where the decision on which a Super Part 2 report has been considered is subject to call-in, the chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee must be briefed on the content of the Super Part 2 report in advance of the call-in meeting and a copy of the report tabled for all members present at the call-in meeting. These copies will be numbered and collected back when the call-in has been completed at that meeting.
- 10.10 The Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer have an overriding duty to ensure compliance with 10.1 – 10.9 above.

11 Correspondence

- 11.1 In all cases, the Council's information governance protocols and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 must be observed.
- 11.2 Correspondence between an individual councillor and an officer should not normally be copied elsewhere without the knowledge of both parties.
- 11.3 Official letters on behalf of the Council should normally be sent out in the name of the appropriate officer, rather than a member. This is particularly important if the letter creates obligations or gives instructions on behalf of the Council. It may be appropriate in certain circumstances (e.g. representations to Central Government) for a letter to be sent signed by a member (e.g. Leader of the Council), but this should be the exception rather than the rule.

12 Relationship between the Mayor and Officers

- 12.1 The Mayor is the first citizen of the Borough. His/her role is to be an ambassador for the authority and to chair the Council meetings. Officers must give every support to the Mayor in the execution of these duties. However, the Mayor does not have any executive powers.

13 Relationship between the Leader of the Council, the Executive and Officers

- 13.1 Whilst the Leader and individual Cabinet members have executive powers, it is essential that they recognise and acknowledge that officers are required to serve the whole Council. On the other hand, it should be accepted that officers have a duty to implement the policies and decisions of the administration. They will have to give professional advice that might, at times, be unpalatable to the majority or minority group or individual councillors, but is felt to be in the best interests of the Council.

14 Relationship between Overview and Scrutiny and Executive Members and Officers

- 14.1 The Overview and Scrutiny function has within the Council's Constitution statutory rights with regard to access to information, member and officer attendance at its meetings, its role with Cabinet and conflict resolution direct to full Council. This is necessary to preserve its independence and role.
- 14.2 However the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a responsibility to act reasonably and within the Constitution. The Monitoring Officer must be consulted if there are any doubts as to the legality of an Executive decision, or if it is felt that such a decision might be contrary to the Council's policy framework.
- 14.3 When calling Cabinet members, officers or other witnesses to give evidence at a scrutiny meeting, questions should be appropriate to their role. For example,

questions to officers should be confined to matters of fact and explanation of any professional opinion relating to policies and decisions. Officers must however respond to questions in an open, constructive and helpful manner. Any question relating to the justification of the policies or decisions should be directed to the relevant Cabinet member. Furthermore, Scrutiny members should not ask officers questions on issues that they know to be confidential.

- 14.4 The relevant chair of the scrutiny meeting must ensure that those giving evidence are not questioned in such a manner as could be considered by any reasonable person to be hostile, offensive, derogatory, harassing, bullying, victimising, discriminatory or otherwise unacceptable behaviour by a member. Chairmen also have a responsibility to ensure that members of the public are not allowed to disrupt the meeting or act in an aggressive or intimidatory manner.
- 14.5 Any allegations in relation 14.4 above should be referred to the Council's Monitoring Officer or to the Leader of the relevant political group.

15 Other Public Meetings

- 15.1 The same rules of behaviour in relation to scrutiny meetings apply to all other public meetings conducted by the Council e.g. Ward Forums – see paragraph 14 above.

Advice on “Purdah”

In order to maintain principles of good governance and to avoid unnecessary conflict with the issues of contention at an election or referendum (i.e. a “relevant issue”), basic adherence to the general rules of purdah will apply.

This note sets out some key information which you may find helpful and forms the basis of that which will be issued prior to relevant electoral events in the Borough by the Monitoring Officer.

General Information

In the period from publication of the statutory notice of election to close of poll at 10:00pm on polling day, the Council, its Members and its Officers should be aware of the special rules designed to ensure the political impartiality of all Council publicity.

Section 6 of the Local Government Act 1986 defines “publicity” as “any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public”. This will include the obvious forms such as newsletters, magazines, press releases, posters and leaflets issued by the Council. It also includes the Enfield website, public meetings, local consultation exercises, exhibitions sponsored by the Council and press advertising, and can include spoken words addressed to the public or broadcast through radio, television or the Internet.

Generally, the Council must avoid:

- proactive publicity of candidates and other politicians involved directly in the electoral event;
- publicity that deals with controversial issues that could specifically be linked to a relevant issue (where this cannot be avoided, the publicity should present issues clearly and fairly with opposing points of views represented); and
- publicity that reports views, proposals or recommendations in such a way that identifies them with individual Members or groups of Members directly involved in the electoral event.

However the Council can:

- respond to events and legitimate service enquiries provided that the answers given are factual and not political; and
- comment on a relevant issue where there is a genuine need for a Member-level response to an important event outside of the Council’s control.

Generally this means that during the election period the Council will:

- exclude all quotes from, and photographs of, Members directly involved in the electoral event in press releases, publications and other published material;
- refrain from organising photo opportunities or events which could be seen as giving candidates, Members or other political office holders directly involved in

the electoral event a platform for political comment;

- postpone publications, events or promotions until after the election if proceeding could give the appearance of seeking to affect support for a political party or candidate directly involved in the electoral event;
- not comment on matters of political controversy unless to refrain from comment would be harmful to the Council's best interests;
- avoid references in publications to the period the Administration has been in office or to the Council's future commitments if to do so could be seen to affect support for a political party or candidate directly involved in the electoral event;
- not undertake any other activity which could be seen as designed to benefit a particular political party or candidate directly involved in the electoral event.

The restrictions on publicity in an election period apply equally to publicity issued by third parties if they are assisted by Council funding. Where it could be shown that Council funding is being used to pay for, say, a charity's publicity, the Council will take reasonable steps to ensure that that organisation complies with the Code of Practice.

To be safe, the Council must plan to avoid publicity or public meetings about any locally controversial proposals or matters that could become an election or referendum issue. Events that could jeopardise our impartiality will be cancelled if they clash with the publicity restrictions during the pre-election period.

Public or committee meetings of a "business as usual" nature, unrelated to the election or referendum issues, may take place. This includes the determination of planning and licensing applications. However, everyone involved will be expected to observe the purdah constraints. The Monitoring Officer must be consulted in advance if there is any doubt as to whether a meeting might breach these guidelines.

If these rules about publicity are broken, the Council could be subject to legal challenge and, in a worst case scenario, election results could be invalidated. Officers who fail to observe the rules could be liable to disciplinary action.

Elected Members

Please note that the above restrictions generally relate to the Council and not to individual Councillors. This means that individual Councillors or political parties may contact the press directly, respond to their calls and set up their own photo shoots to promote a candidate or political party involved in the electoral event.

However, they may not use the Council's resources or facilities to do so. When at Council events, Councillors must not use that platform for political purposes. This includes Ward Forums, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its workstreams and other public meetings.

In such circumstances, it is acceptable to include a note on political literature along the following lines:

“To contact your councillors about any matter for which the Council is responsible, phone _ (your Council funded line).

For any XXX party/election matter, please contact _ (political office number).”

Council Staff

Council staff should exercise extreme caution if invited to any event in which candidates in the election participate.

Managers of all Council-owned buildings should seek similar advice before allowing the Council's resources to be used for any “official or unofficial” visit by a candidate or political party directly involved in the election.

Schools

The Local Education Authority has a responsibility to ensure that its resources are not used for political purposes during an election period. Its employees also have personal responsibilities.

Head teachers and school staff should not be involved in any activity (in their official capacity) that promotes or is perceived to promote a political party or any candidate or politician involved in the election. This includes the endorsement of a candidate verbally or in writing. Some Head teachers and staff have been asked to do this in the past. They should, for example, refrain from photo opportunities with you, candidates or politicians or from participating in or organising events that could give others a platform for political comment or publicity.

Officers must not give support for one political party or candidate over others as such actions could leave them open to political bias and a potential breach of the Code of Practice.

Political parties may distribute leaflets outside of the school grounds providing they are not causing an obstruction or disturbance. They should not however enter the school premises.

