

# **WELSHPOOL TOWN COUNCIL**

## **DRAFT WARD PROTOCOL**



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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.01 Several Members of Welshpool Town Council have approached the Town Clerk seeking clarity with regard to a Protocol for representation of ward constituents and matters that they raise. This paper sets out a draft protocol.

## **2.0 Protocol on the Representational Role of Councillors**

- 2.1 In undertaking their duties in relation to the governance of the Council, Members tend to operate within an environment where their views and opinions are fed into, and influenced by, the Council policies as set by the Town and Community Plans. Members also fulfil a separate, though related role, in representing the views of their constituents and acting as a link between constituents and the Council.
- 2.2 Even within a political environment, the representative role is at the heart of local democracy. It provides a vital conduit between the Council and the electorate through which the public can seek to understand and influence the decisions which the Council takes.
- 2.3 The Councillors' representational role is integral to the other activities of the Council in consulting the public on key decisions, policies and strategies and also in explaining and informing the public about the work of the Council.
- 2.4 This protocol sets out the ways in which constituents of each ward might seek to contact and influence their local Councillors and also the ways in which Councillors might seek to represent those views and concerns within each ward area.

## **3.0 Receiving Representations from the Public**

- 3.1 As the elected representative of a particular Ward, Councillors have an obligation to make themselves available and accessible to their constituents.
- 3.2 This obligation could be fulfilled in a number of ways, though it is for individual Members to make their own arrangements.
- 3.3 The following means of contact are listed by way of example:
- by letter (either at a home address or via the Civic Offices)
  - by phone (either at a home or business phone, or via the Civic Offices)
  - via e-mail – at home/work or via the Civic Offices
  - at Ward surgeries
  - during canvassing for election purposes
  - during everyday contact with the public

#### **4.0 Supporting and Representing Constituents**

4.1 The Council has established a number of formal ways in which Councillors may seek to support or represent their constituents - These include:

- asking questions at Council meetings.
- placing items on the agenda at Committee Meetings.
- by visiting the Town Clerk.

4.2 In addition, there are a number of other, informal ways in which Councillors may seek to support and represent their constituents and these are set out in the following paragraphs.

##### **At Meetings of the Council**

In speaking during discussions or debates at Council meetings, Members may wish to express a view on behalf of constituents, or to explain the impact of a decision or Council policy on their ward constituents.

##### **At Committees**

The Committees present the ideal forum at which Councillors (whether or not they are Members of the Committee) may give expression to the views and concerns of their ward constituents.

The Committees in particular are expected to work much more informally than traditional Committees and there should be ample opportunity for Members to represent constituents' views.

##### **The Town Clerk's Offices**

Councillors will continue, as at present to take up problems and complaints with the Town Clerk of the Town Council. This is a vital part of Members' representational role. In a lot of local instances an approach is made to the Town Clerk who deals with the matter (if of a minor nature) or refers the matter to the first appropriate Committee of the Council for consideration. It is proposed that this continues.

#### **5.0 Matters which are the responsibility of Parliament or Welsh Government**

5.1 With regard to matters which are under the control of other Authorities (not the County or Town Councils) such as the Welsh Government or Parliament, these should be referred to the Town Clerk for action or taken to the appropriate Committee.

**6.0 Matters outside a Member's own Ward (County Council matters)**

The following shall apply to matters which are the responsibility of the County Council:

(a) Members of the Council will, if approached regarding a matter outside their own Ward, normally refer the enquirer or objector to their local County Council Member or alternatively the Town Clerk who can take matters up directly. (in that case the ward councillor is to be informed at the first available meeting or earlier if the matter is of a substantial nature).

(b) If the Member approached considers that there is good reason for them to be involved in the matter instead of or in addition to the local Member, then they should notify the local Member of that fact and the reasons as soon as possible.

If the local Member agrees that this line can be followed. However, the local Member makes that decision.

**7.0 Matters outside a Member's own Ward (Town Council matters)**

7.1 The following shall apply to matters which are the responsibility of the Town Council:

(a) Members of the Council will, if approached regarding a matter outside their own Ward, normally refer the enquirer or objector to a Town Council Member of that ward or alternatively the Town Clerk who can take matters up directly. (in that case the ward councillors are informed at the first available meeting or earlier if the matter is of a substantial nature).

(b) If the Member approached considers that there is good reason for them to be involved in the matter instead of or in addition to the local Member, then they should notify a Ward Member of that fact and the reasons as soon as possible.

If the Ward Member agrees that this line can be followed. However, the Ward Member makes that decision.

**8.0 Other representative groups**

8.1 There are instances where Members are elected to a particular representative body (ie Police Liaison, Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee etc). In these cases the representatives so elected should seek to ensure that the views expressed by all ward members are tabled.

8.2 A Member not part of such a grouping may attend by invite of the Chair of that grouping where a particular ward issue is raised.

## **9.0 Statutory undertakers**

- 9.1 Where a statutory undertaker is involved in a Councillors ward the ward Councillor may either contact the authority direct or via the Town Clerk. If such a matter is not in a Councillors ward it should be referred to either a Ward Councillor or the Town Clerk.

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Welshpool Town Council

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