



Part C – The Cabinet

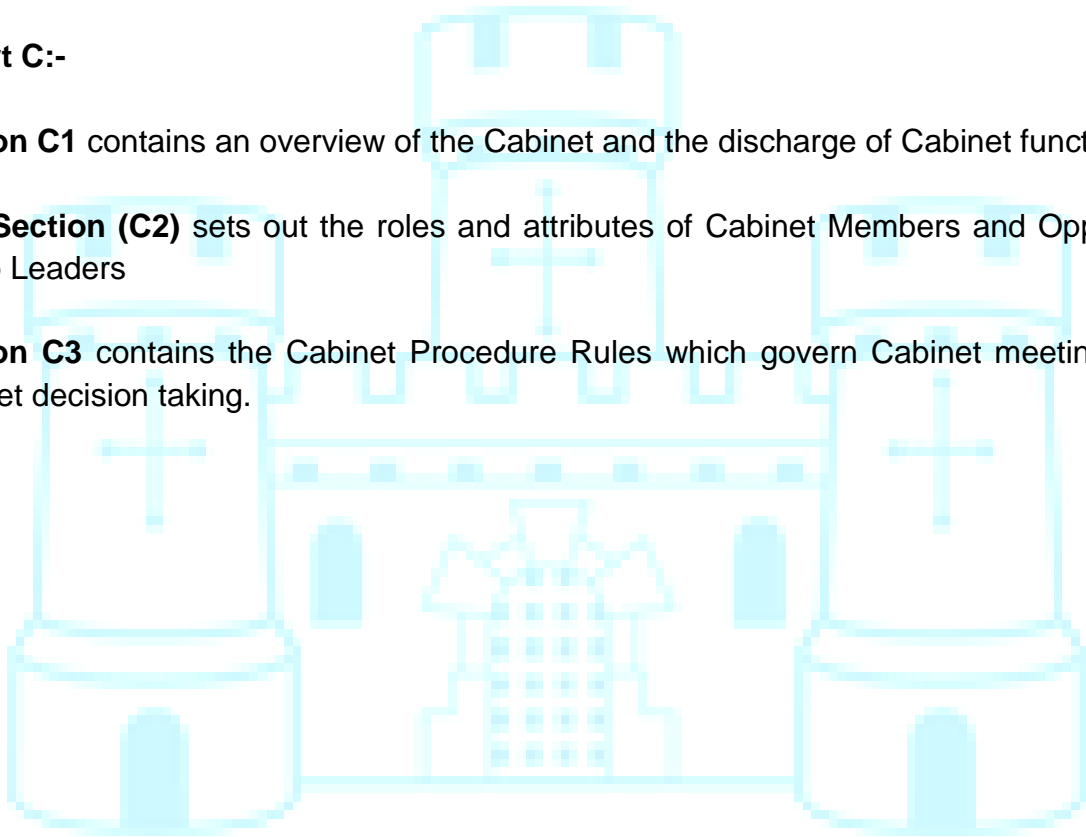
Section C2:- The Roles, Responsibilities and Attributes of Cabinet Members

In Part C:-

Section C1 contains an overview of the Cabinet and the discharge of Cabinet functions.

This Section (C2) sets out the roles and attributes of Cabinet Members and Opposition Group Leaders

Section C3 contains the Cabinet Procedure Rules which govern Cabinet meetings and Cabinet decision taking.



NEWCASTLE
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BOROUGH COUNCIL



Part C – The Cabinet

Section C2:- The Roles, Responsibilities and Attributes of Cabinet Members

In this Section:-

1. **Cabinet Members**

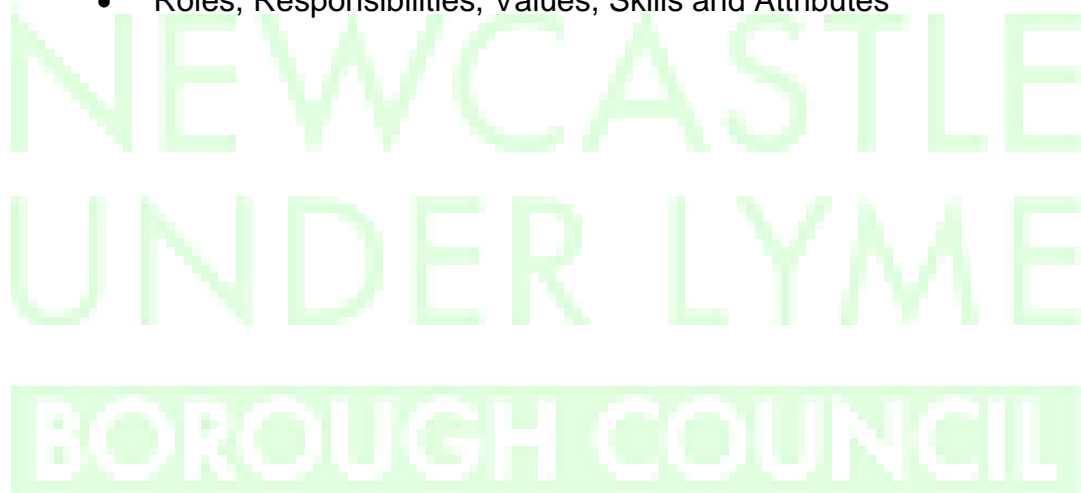
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1. Cabinet Members

Introduction

- 1.1 The roles, responsibilities, values, skills, and attributes expected of all Members set out in Section B3 of the Constitution also apply to the Cabinet Members. Cabinet Members should demonstrate a higher level of aptitude commensurate with their role as a Cabinet Member.
- 1.2 The additional role of the Cabinet Member is principally to be a figurehead or champion for all matters falling within their Portfolio. They are responsible for providing political leadership, oversight and accountability for all matters within their Portfolio.
- 1.3 Cabinet Members also have collective responsibilities and must take an interest in each other's Portfolios so that they can support each other, recognise and contribute to issues which cut across different Portfolios, and take an active part in meetings of the Cabinet and collective decision taking.
- 1.4 Cabinet Members are accountable to the Cabinet, the Leader, Council, and ultimately to the communities that they are elected to represent.

Member of the Cabinet

- 1.5 Operating in this capacity, it is the role of all Cabinet Members to work with Officers and to formulate strategic and statutory policy documents which ensure that the priorities and objectives set by Council are carried to and delivered through the Cabinet

Portfolio Holder

- 1.6 Operating in this capacity, it is the role of all Cabinet Members to:-
 - (a) provide assistance and direction in working up and carrying through a strategic work plan for the Portfolio embracing the requirements of Council and statute undertaking appropriate consultation with stakeholders as required, and ensuring the Portfolio's forward work plan is accurate and up to date.
 - (b) be a strong, competent, knowledgeable and persuasive spokesperson to represent the Portfolio and give political direction to Officers on Portfolio matters



- (c) act as a figurehead in meetings with stakeholders providing leadership and brokering differences of opinion and competing priorities particularly when working with partners to achieve common aims.
- (d) operate as an inclusive and adaptive leader on Portfolio matters within the community showing vision and foresight and encouraging community empowerment, engagement and participation.

Accountability

1.7 One of the key responsibilities of all Cabinet Members is to be ultimately accountable for the discharge of their Portfolio responsibilities. This requires all Cabinet Members to:-

- (a) have a sound overview of the performance management, efficiency and effectiveness of the Portfolio and participate fully in the setting of strategic agendas and work programs.
- (b) report as appropriate to the Leader, Council, Cabinet, and relevant regulatory bodies.
- (c) liaise with the appropriate Scrutiny Chairmen in discharging Portfolio responsibilities, appear before Scrutiny Committees as and when required and receive Scrutiny reports.

Skills and Attributes

1.8 In addition to the skills and attributes of all Members set out in Section B3 of the constitution, the following skills and attributes are particularly important for an effective Cabinet Member:-

- (a) Sound current knowledge of issues and objectives at national and local levels and of the Council's objectives, strategies, policies and operations in order to be able to constructively challenge decisions, suggest alternatives and contribute to discussion and resolution of cross cutting and collective issues.
- (b) Well developed and demonstrable adaptive and inclusive leadership, advocacy, communication, negotiation and interpersonal skills.
- (c) The ability to gain the respect of Officers within the Portfolio and provide support to Officers in the implementation of Portfolio programmes.
- (d) The ability to exercise foresight, strategic awareness and judgement, to think laterally and creatively, excellent knowledge of decision making processes, protocols, policies, codes of conduct and who to involve in decision making.



2. Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council

Introduction

- 2.1 References in this section to the Leader of the Council include the Deputy Leader unless the context suggests otherwise.
- 2.2 The roles, responsibilities, values, skills, and attributes expected of all Members set out in Section B3 and of Cabinet Members as set out above also apply the Leader of the Council. The Leader should demonstrate a higher level of aptitude commensurate with their role as Leader.
- 2.3 The Leader of the Council is elected to that office by all of the other Members of Council. The Leader appoints the Deputy and other Cabinet Members and is Chair of the Cabinet and the political figurehead for the Council.
- 2.4 The Leader provides political leadership to the Council by forming a political consensus around Council policies and forming a vision for the Council and the community.
- 2.5 The Leader is responsible for providing strong, clear leadership in the co-ordination of policies, strategies and service delivery and acts as the principal political spokesperson for the Council.
- 2.6 The Deputy Leader of the Council is responsible for assisting and supporting the Leader and discharging the duties of the Leader in his or her absence.
- 2.7 The Leader is accountable to Council, and ultimately to the communities that they are elected to represent.

Leading the Council

- 2.8 Operating in this capacity, it is the Leader's role to:-
- compile Portfolio responsibilities and allocate them to the other Cabinet Members having regard to their abilities.
 - fulfil the role of a Portfolio holder and advise and mentor other Cabinet Members.
 - lead and manage the work and continual development of the Cabinet to ensure that it meets national and local policy objectives through the forward plan, effective leadership, effective management, chairmanship of meetings /briefings and appropriate liaison and co-ordination with Senior Officers.



- (d) work closely with other Cabinet Members to ensure the development of an effective Budget and Policy Framework and the delivery of high quality services.
- (e) accept collective responsibility and support decisions made by the Cabinet once they have been made.
- (f) liaise with the Chief Executive and other appropriate Officers on a regular basis to lead the organisation, develop the strategic vision and direction of the Council, the management roles of Officers and the development of policy.
- (g) promote inclusive leadership, fulfil the role of mediator and to seek to resolve difficulties and build consensus when differences arise between Members or Members and Officers.

Representing the Council

2.9 Operating in this capacity, it is the Leader's role to:-

- (a) provide strong, competent and eloquent representation and leadership for the Council at national, regional and local levels.
- (b) act as the public sector champion and provide leadership and support local partnerships and organisations in the pursuit of common aims and priorities.

Skills and Attributes

2.10 In addition to the skills and attributes of all Members and Cabinet Members, the following skills and attributes are particularly important to be an effective Leader:-

- (a) knowledge of community strengths, areas of improvement, and key issues facing the Council.
- (b) a good working knowledge of all Portfolios.
- (c) a good understanding of the relationship between national and local politics and policy objectives.
- (d) a good understanding and awareness of and ability to promote the Council's strategies, policies and operations.
- (e) the ability to recognise talent amongst Members and to appraise, guide and mentor senior Members.
- (f) the ability to negotiate the most advantageous appointments within and across political groups.
- (g) enhanced adaptive and inclusive leadership style, advocacy, communication, negotiation and interpersonal skills to enable the ambassadorial role to be undertaken



and to communicate effectively with the media, local community and a wider variety of audiences.

- (h) enhanced chairing skills, a sound understanding of the constitution, procedure rules, codes and practices to effectively manage the work of the Cabinet, chair meetings to encourage full participation and engagement from the public and all Members
- (i) the ability and desire to seek consensus and compromise when in the best interests of the Council and the whole electorate of Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- (j) a good understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Executive and other Officers and the ability to foster good working relationships.

3. Leader and Deputy Leader of Opposition Political Groups

Introduction

- 3.1 Opposition Political Groups (“Group(s)”) are those political groups that do not, as a group, hold a majority of the seats on the Council. Each Group will elect a leader. This section relates to the roles and responsibilities of Group leaders within the Council and does not cover the role of Group leaders within their Groups.
- 3.2 References in this section to Group leaders include any deputy leader of those Groups unless the context suggests otherwise.

Shadowing the Cabinet

- 3.3 The role of a Group leader is to provide a political figurehead, point of contact and spokesperson for their Group. Group leaders effectively assume the role of “shadow” Leader of the Council. Group leaders do not exercise any executive powers and do not operate as spokespersons on behalf of the Council. They discharge a representational/spokesperson role from the perspective of their own group in parallel to that of the Leader of the Council.
- 3.4 Opposition Groups may, if they wish, also appoint “Shadow” Cabinet Members usually aligned to the Portfolio appointments made by the Leader of the Council. Much like Group leaders, Shadow Cabinet Members do not exercise any executive powers and do not operate as spokespersons on behalf of the Council. They discharge a representational/spokesperson role from the perspective of their own Group in parallel to that of the Cabinet Member that they shadow.



- 3.5 Group leaders and any Shadow Cabinet Members are accountable to their group and ultimately to the communities that they are elected to represent.

Building Consensus and Informed Alternative Views

- 3.6 Group leaders and any Shadow Cabinet Members have an important role to play as mediators who seek to resolve difficulties or differences of opinion which may arise between Groups, between Members of their Group or between Members of their Group and Officers.
- 3.7 The overriding objective of this role is to build consensus amongst Members as to what is in the best interests of the Borough. There may be circumstances when it is appropriate for Group leaders and/or any Shadow Cabinet Member to offer an informed alternative view on matters which fall to the Leader and Cabinet to be determined or undertaken.
- 3.8 The role of providing appropriate and informed alternative views is part of the informal Scrutiny process that is essential to open and transparent governance arrangements that is to be exercised in a constructive manner and not solely for party political purposes.

Roles, Responsibilities, Values, Skills and Attributes

- 3.9 The roles, responsibilities, values, skills, and attributes expected of all Members set out in Section B3 of the Constitution apply to all Group leaders and any Shadow Cabinet Members.
- 3.10 With the exception of functions relating to the administration or discharge of Cabinet functions, the roles, responsibilities, values, skills and attributes expected of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members also apply to Group leaders and any Shadow Cabinet Members.
- 3.11 In particular, the following skills and attributes are particularly important to be an effective Group leader or Shadow Cabinet Member:-
- (a) The ability and desire to be pragmatic, seek consensus and to compromise in the best interests of the Council and the Borough
 - (b) The ability to constructively challenge decisions and suggest alternatives.