

NEWCASTLE  
UNDER LYME  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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# MEMBERS' HANDBOOK

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2022

As an elected member you are in the privileged position of being able to make a real difference to the quality of life of the residents and communities that you represent. Whilst a hugely rewarding role, it does bring with it many challenges and demands on your time. Inevitably, you will find yourself with a complex work-life balance; the needs and interests of diverse constituents, your political group, the work of the Council as well as your family, work and other responsibilities. And, of course, you need to leave some space in all of this for yourself and your own wellbeing.



**Martin Hamilton**  
*Chief Executive*

As your Chief Executive, I will do all that I can to support you in the role and will ensure that my team does the same. We will provide training courses and briefings to ensure that you are well placed to play a full and active role as a councillor – whether that is on the Planning Committee, scrutiny, or in the Cabinet. Officers will be able to advise you on particular ward issues which come up through your case work and, of course, as officers we produce numerous reports which you will find useful in understanding what the Council is doing and how well it is performing.

This Members' Handbook contains a wide range of useful information, from advice on personal safety, to using social media and also a directory of senior officers contact details.

I hope you will find the handbook useful and I look forward to working with you to support you in your role.

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This booklet is designed to help councillors to understand how the Council works and what the role itself entails. It should be used as a continuing resource and reference tool for you during your period of office.

You will want to get to grips with your role and this guide is intended to help you to get a basic knowledge and understanding of local government, detail what the Council does, who does what, and where to find and contact officers.

The Council is committed to achieving excellence in everything that it does and it recognises the importance of developing and supporting councillors in making this a reality.

Our commitment to you is to equip all councillors with the various range of skills and support that will be needed to do the job effectively and efficiently.

## A short history of Newcastle

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Newcastle is named after a “new castle” that was built in the area in the 12th century. The “Lyme” part of the name derives either from the Lyme Brook that flows through the town or from the lyme (meaning beech) forest that covered a large part of land in the medieval period.

In prehistoric times, the area was very sparsely populated. The Cornovii tribe populated the area during the Iron Age and there was a hill fort settlement at this time at Berth Hill near Maer.

In the 1st century AD, the Romans established a fort at Chesterton, a settlement at Holditch and a villa at Hales. There is evidence of a Saxon settlement in the borough during the 6th to 9th centuries.

Madeley was granted a Royal Charter in 975 by King Edgar and the area was also mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. Bradwell, Wolstanton, Clayton, Knutton, Hill Chorlton, Chapel Chorlton and Maer also appear in the Book, although Newcastle itself is not mentioned.

The castle in Newcastle was constructed to defend the area against attacks from the Welsh borders and to protect Royal lands from claims to the throne.



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The town of Newcastle was planned and established by King Henry II and its first charter was granted in 1173. The King encouraged the growth of Newcastle's market, which attracted traders from far and wide. The area flourished because of the rapidly expanding market and Newcastle became the most important market town in the area.

In 1235 the town's leading traders formed a Guild Merchant, which later led to the establishment of the Guildhall, a notable landmark in the borough. By the 15th century, many medieval castles were converted or rebuilt as stately homes.

Powerful and wealthy families such as the Lords Audley of Heighley Castle and the Sneyds of Bradwell, and later Keele, wielded absolute political control over Newcastle for more than two centuries.

A charter granted by Queen Elizabeth I, in 1590, confirmed many of the borough's existing rights and led to the setting up of a more formal system of local government, comprising a mayor, bailiffs and burgesses.

The borough has been a centre for various industries, including the hatting trade, which prospered from the 16th to 19th centuries.

The town of Newcastle-under-Lyme also boasted a number of silk and cotton mills and more recently the area has been known for coal mining, marl extraction and brick-making.

Across the borough the emphasis is now on light industry, logistics and knowledge economy businesses, with several national and international firms moving to the area.

The University of Keele and Keele Science Park have grown in recent years to become a key part of our borough, with the park in particular bringing many highly skilled jobs to our area.

Many historic items are kept in the borough, including the 1590 charter at the Borough Museum and civic regalia in the Mayor's Parlour at Castle House. Two silver maces dating back to 1680 are still used at every Full Council meeting.

Major local government reforms that took place in the 20th century saw the borough's boundaries extend to include Wolstanton, rural villages to the west and Kids Grove to the north - creating an area of around 81 square miles.

The Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme is one of eight second tier districts within Staffordshire and has a population of approximately 129,600 (2020). Roughly 80 per cent of the population live in the borough's urban area with the remaining 20 per cent living rurally.

The borough's urban area consists of Newcastle town (including former coalfields communities, district centres and suburban areas), which adjoins the City of Stoke-on-Trent and forms the western part of the North Staffordshire conurbation, and the town of Kidsgrove to the north. The rural area, which covers approximately 86 per cent of the borough, stretches from the north-east border with Staffordshire Moorlands to the south west where it borders Shropshire. The borough's north-west border is with Cheshire East.

The closure of a number of coal mines during the last two decades of the 20th century had a profound effect on employment rates, job opportunities and the strength of the local economy. Two of the Borough's 21 wards - Cross Heath and Knutton - contain areas which are among the 10 per cent most deprived in England, whilst Holditch and Chesterton, Kidsgrove and Ravenscliffe, Crackley and Red Street, Town, and Westlands contain areas that are within the 20 per cent most deprived, according to the 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

The Borough Council provides a range of local services to a diverse and widespread population. Some services might be used every day, some only once in a lifetime. For example, we empty bins, clean the streets, provide leisure and sports centres, run parks and play areas, provide housing advice and homelessness support, enforce hygiene standards in local food premises, process planning applications and maintain the cemeteries and crematorium.

We achieve our objectives through using our own resources and by working in partnerships with a range of bodies including Staffordshire Police and Fire Services, Staffordshire County Council, the NHS and other health agencies, Central Government, voluntary and community organisations and other local councils to deliver services that make a real difference to the lives of local people. This work is coordinated through Newcastle Partnership along with other thematic partnerships such as the Local Enterprise Partnership which is concerned with economic issues.

Like local councils all over the country we face many challenges. National and local expectations of councils are rising and we have to work hard to balance the different demands on us and find solutions to these issues.

## Code of Conduct

Each year, elected members are required to complete a form showing any interests that you may have which could be affected by decisions made by the Council.

Although you will be asked annually to review your interests it is your responsibility to notify the Monitoring Officer of any changes that may occur throughout the year, again within 28 days of any change occurring.

Every council is required to adopt a Code of Conduct that sets out the rules governing the behaviour of its members. All elected, co-opted and independent members of local authorities, including parish councils, are covered by the code.

As a councillor you are required to comply with the Code of Conduct and it is very important that you read it and become aware of its requirements. A copy of the code can be found in the Council's Constitution.

The Code of Conduct covers areas of individual behaviours, such as members not abusing their position and not misusing the Council's resources. It also explains the nature of personal and prejudicial interests.

Members are also required to declare the receipt of any gift or hospitality in the Gifts and Hospitality Register maintained by the Monitoring Officer.

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## Council buildings

Most council business is conducted in Castle House, Barracks Road, Newcastle (plans of each floor with key areas can be found on the intranet).

The Council shares the building with its partners including Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire County Council.

The offices are open to the public from 9am to 5pm weekdays. Employees and members can gain access from 7am until 7pm.

Some of the Council's services are located at the Central Depot site in Knutton Lane. Services here include Streetscene, Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance, Landscape Design, Recycling and Waste and Environmental Health Services.

Councillors are issued with an ID badge which should be worn at all times when in civic buildings for reasons of safety/security. You are likely to be challenged if your badge is not visible. This badge will be required to enable access through the various security doors around the buildings.

## Insurance

You should notify your motor insurers that you have been elected to the office of councillor if you intend using your car for Council business, including attendance at meetings. Failure to do so may invalidate your insurance. Similarly some buildings/ contents insurers may require that they are informed and again failure to do so may affect your policy cover.

## Public Relations

It is important for councillors to realise that whatever is said to the media impacts upon the reputation of the Council. Officers in the Council's Communications Team are available to provide advice whenever members are approached by representatives from newspapers, television or radio (tel: 742605 or 742606).

You can follow the Council on social media via Twitter (@NewsNBC) and Facebook (@newcastlebc).  
On the Council's website - [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk) - you can also keep tabs on breaking news.



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## Security / Access to the Offices

You will be issued with an ID card, showing your photograph, which allows you access to the non-public parts of Castle House and Central Depot at Knutton Lane.

## Technology

ICT (Information and Communication Technology) is an essential tool for use by any member of the Council. You are on the front line of public service provision and there is an expectation by the public and the Council that elected members become confident and adept in the use of ICT in their role.

Members are allocated a secure email address, which must be used for all Council business, which follows the format:  
firstname.surname@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

On the Council's website there is a huge amount of information on all the services we provide. Under the "Your Council" section on the homepage all councillor contact information is displayed as well as minutes, agendas, the forward plan and so on.

The ICT team at the Council are available to support elected members to use appropriate technology and will provide access training for members if required. Office 365 is provided, with access to email, Teams, OneDrive and SharePoint using member's personal equipment (pc, laptop, phone).

## How much time will being a councillor take up?

This depends on your role within the Council and could range from a few hours a week to several hours a day. You should be prepared to commit some time each week in order to carry out your role effectively. Obviously, as your responsibilities increase, so also would the time commitment.

Most of the Council's formal meetings take place in the evening, starting at 7pm, but there are some meetings held during the day. For most of these meetings, agendas/ reports will be available which should be read before the meeting so that the decision-making process can run smoothly. If, having read the agenda you feel that you would like to discuss one or more of the items in greater detail, or if you require clarification regarding any of the information provided, then please do not hesitate to contact the relevant officer or service for a discussion prior to the meeting.

You may encounter situations for which you feel more training is required in addition to those sessions offered by the Council. Should you wish to receive additional training on a particular subject, please contact the Democratic Services team.

Your constituents will approach you for help from time-to-time. You will probably receive some post in addition to that which you are expected to collect from Castle House on a weekly basis, and you may get phone calls at unsocial hours.

## Time off work

By law, your employer must allow you a reasonable amount of time away from work to perform your duties as a councillor (Employment Rights Act 1996. s50). The amount of time allowed will depend on your responsibilities as councillor and the effect it would have on your employer's business.

## Agendas and Minutes

Agendas for meetings will be sent to you by email at least five working days before a meeting. Occasionally, supplementary items will be sent later or circulated at the meeting where necessary. After the meeting, minutes will be prepared and sent by email to the chair and key officers.

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## Exempt Information

Although most agendas are public documents, some will contain 'exempt' information which may relate to financial or personal information. When disposing of correspondence/agendas, any confidential pages must be removed and shredded (officers can assist with such disposals).

## General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

GDPR became law on 25 May 2018. Many of GDPR's main concepts and principles are much the same as those in the previous Data Protection Act. However, the GDPR places greater emphasis on the documentation that data controllers (such as the Borough Council) must keep to demonstrate their accountability. This means maintaining records of processing activities – what personal data you hold, where it came from and who you share it with.

### Personal data means:

*“any information relating to an identifiable person who can be directly or indirectly identified in particular by reference to an identifier”*

This definition provides for a wide range of personal identifiers to constitute personal data, including name, identification number, location data or online identifier, reflecting changes in technology and the way organisations collect information about people.

The GDPR applies to both automated personal data and to manual filing systems where personal data are accessible according to specific criteria. This could include chronologically ordered sets of manual records containing personal data.

The GDPR requires that personal data shall be:-

- a) processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to individuals;
- b) collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes; further processing for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes shall not be considered to be incompatible with the initial purposes;
- c) adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed;

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d) accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date; every reasonable step must be taken to ensure that personal data that are inaccurate, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed, are erased or rectified without delay;

e) kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed; personal data may be stored for longer periods insofar as the personal data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes subject to implementation of the appropriate technical and organisational measures required by the GDPR in order to safeguard the rights and freedoms of individuals; and

f) processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures.

For more information concerning individual rights, erasure, restriction and objection or how to make a subject access request please visit [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/all-services/advice/data-protection](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/all-services/advice/data-protection).

You can also see how to contact the Council if you require any further information.

An important principle of fulfilling your role as a councillor is to engage with residents in your area, and that might be in a variety of ways including face-to-face contact, on the phone, or in writing. However, it is essential that you should always consider your own personal safety in any form of communication.

Set out below is some general good practice guidance in relation to personal safety.

## Visits to a resident's address

Councillors do sometimes visit residents in their homes, especially if the resident is elderly or disabled or if the councillor simply wants to see for themselves conditions that are the subject of complaints. The necessity of home visits should be carefully considered: explore all other options, for example using the phone, email, Zoom, meeting in a café etc. before undertaking a home visit.

It is for each councillor to decide whether a particular visit should be made, especially if the person to be visited is unknown to the councillor.

Most councillors trust their own instincts as to whether to meet someone alone. Sometimes the councillor might prefer to be accompanied by a ward colleague, obtain an initial report from council officers or invite the person to a more public place.

- Ensure someone is aware of where you are with an anticipated return time and has your contact number to check on your welfare should you exceed that timescale.
- Ensure your mobile phone is charged and check reception before entering the property – 999 calls will locate all networks so should cover most areas in case of emergency.
- Conduct your own (dynamic) risk assessment on the doorstep before you enter. If you feel at all uncomfortable or unsure, make an excuse and leave. Trust your instincts. Look for others and animals who may pose a threat.
- Be prepared to show your ID badge and have your details verified.
- Knock and step back from the doorstep, this allows both you and the resident space to verify your safety, try to follow them to ensure your safe exit is not blocked.



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- Give some thought before you arrive as to what exit strategies you could use if you feel uncomfortable or threatened. Plan a code-word before the visit which would indicate to a colleague in a phone-call that you required assistance without alerting the resident.
  - Ensure that you position yourself so that if needed you can leave the room/area quickly.
  - Be mindful of the fact that you are entering someone else's territory. Your presence there may be unwanted and/or pose a threat.
  - As you enter, make a note of how the door opens and closes so that you can leave quickly, if necessary. Request the door remains unlocked for the duration of your visit.
  - Carry minimal items and keep keys and mobile on your person at all times. Leave valuables at home or out of sight in your vehicle.
  - Do not accept offers of food or drink, say you have just had one, will need the toilet etc. to avoid offence.
  - Avoid using the bathroom if possible, consider your route beforehand and identify alternatives such as supermarkets or public conveniences in the area.

## Driving

- Put together an emergency kit for your vehicle. This might include an extra coat (preferably high visibility), a bottle of water, torch, emergency triangle, spare change and an emergency mobile phone charger.
- Consider joining an emergency breakdown recovery service.
- Always park as close as feasible to your venue, drive past the venue first if necessary to identify suitable parking locations.
- If you will be returning after dark, consider what the area will be like at that time and try to park near a streetlight.
- When parking in a car park, consider where the entrances and exits are. Try to avoid having to walk across a deserted car park to get to your vehicle. Park away from pillars/barriers. If you can, reverse into your space so you can drive away easily.

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- When approaching your vehicle, be aware of your surroundings; have your keys ready and check that no one is inside before entering quickly.
  - If you break down, check out your surroundings and only get out of your vehicle when, and if, you feel it is safe to do so. The exception to this would be on a motorway where you should always leave the vehicle and wait for assistance on the embankment.
  - Road rage incidents are rare and can often be avoided by not responding to aggression from other drivers.
  - If the driver of another vehicle forces you to stop and then gets out of his/her vehicle, stay where you are, keep the engine running and if you need to, reverse to get away.

## **Car safety and parking**

You need to take the same precautions as most car owners do:-

- Consider whether an area will be dark and isolated when you return to your car.
- Lock all valuables out of sight in the boot, even small change can be a temptation.
- Park, where possible, under street lighting.
- Lock car doors as soon as getting into the car.
- Take boxes/bags to the car when other people are around.

## **Using public transport**

- Obtain timetable and fare information before travelling to prevent you waiting around for long periods at bus stops or stations.
- When waiting for public transport after dark, try to wait in well-lit areas and near emergency alarms and CCTV cameras.

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## Walking

- Plan ahead. Before you go out, think about how you are going to get home, for example what time the last bus/train leaves.
- Always try to walk to / from your vehicle or bus stop in pairs rather than being alone.
- Consider purchasing and holding a personal alarm when walking anywhere alone.
- Don't display your ID badge when walking between locations.
- Carry minimal items and do not advertise items of value such as laptops, mobile phones.
- When walking to a venue, remain alert, never walk and talk on a mobile or wear headphones. Avoid walking through alleyways or over unlit ground unless unavoidable.
- Should you feel someone is following you, cross the road, if they follow, cross again. If they persist in following you, enter a local business or knock on a door which appears occupied and explain your situation
- Wear sensible footwear which would enable you to run if necessary.
- Avoid danger spots like quiet or badly-lit alleyways, subways or isolated car parks. Walk down the middle of the pavement if the street is deserted.
- Try to use well-lit, busy streets and use the route you know best.

## Visiting the office

- Always ensure your ID badge is clearly visible, sign in and obtain a badge for every visit if you do not have your own – sign out as you leave, returning any visitor passes.
- If someone asks to see your ID do not be offended, allow them to see your ID and confirm your identity. Doing this helps to keep everyone safe in the building.

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- Do not allow anyone to tailgate behind you, if anyone attempts this, ask to check their ID.
  - For public meetings attendees will be requested to sign in.
  - Where the location permits, Councillors will enter and leave a meeting room for public meetings via a separate door to the public.
  - Should the fire alarm or other emergency occur, follow site procedures or directions from local staff as applicable.

## **Malicious and nuisance telephone calls**

Councillors can sometimes receive nuisance or abusive phone calls. They can also become the target of a persistent anonymous caller who may have a grudge against them as individuals or more widely against the Council. These calls should be dealt with in accordance with police advice as follows:-

- Keep the caller talking (in the hope of gleaning relevant information).
- Note any clues the caller may provide as to their sex, accent, etc.
- Listen for any clues as to the motive and intention of the caller.
- Write down the details immediately to assist the police and/or the Council at a later stage.
- Listen for background noise which may provide valuable information (such as railway sounds, industrial noises, machinery, music, animals).
- Inform the police with as much of the above information as you can.
- Inform the Council's Democratic Services team

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## Ward surgeries

The arrangements each councillor makes will vary accordingly to local circumstances and it will be a fortunate councillor who can find premises for their surgery which meet every aspect of good practice and are also accessible to their constituents.

What follows are suggestions about how to make a surgery safe and effective – some apply wherever the surgery is held while others are good practice to be followed if the opportunity arises.

Most councillors will go through their entire service to the Council without experiencing any problems, and a little time given to preparation and planning can reduce the already small risk further.

- If possible do not hold surgeries alone in an otherwise empty building. Try to get someone to act as “receptionist”. This not only makes you safer but makes it much easier to manage a busy surgery. If you are currently doing surgeries alone, arrange to discuss how this can be overcome with fellow councillors or members of the local party.
- If you cannot avoid doing surgeries on your own, make sure you remember a few simple guidelines. The layout of the room should suit you, for example, sit nearest to the door with the constituents seated on the other side of the table. Seating is best set out at an angle of 45 degrees (seating directly opposite can be confrontational).
- If there is no separate waiting room, try to ensure that the waiting constituents are as far as possible away from those whom you are talking to.
- Make sure there are no heavy items in the room that could be used as weapons.

If you are at the stage of looking for suitable premises in which to hold a surgery, try to get a space with as many of the following features:

- Council premises (such as libraries) during opening hours or other premises where there are many other people about.
- Premises where the names of any visitors for councillors are recorded.
- Premises where there is a comfortable waiting area.



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The surgery (interviewing) room:

- Is in view of the reception by an alarm and there is a procedure for dealing with a call for assistance.
- Has a vision panel in the door.
- Has a swift means of escape and any visitors are not able to lock the door from the inside.

## Dealing with emotional constituents

It is inevitable that some of the people you will meet will be angry or upset. You need to be prepared to handle all types of emotion. For example, you may consider having some tissues on hand for the person for whom it is just too much and who bursts into tears.

Councillors have to develop the quiet skill of being concerned about constituents' problems without being so involved that they become too emotional to be of help. Calmness in the face of whatever comes up will help you and your constituents.

You may find that racist or other offensive remarks are made. If they are directed at you – do not respond – this will only make the situation worse. Instead bring the meeting to an end as quickly as possible. If they are more general remarks, you should indicate that this is not acceptable and that you cannot continue the meeting. Often this will elicit an apology. Otherwise ask the person to leave. However, you must use your own judgement and if you are alone and in a vulnerable situation, do not put yourself at risk no matter how angry the remarks make you.

## Reporting incidents

Any incidents of concern even if fairly minor or “nearly happened” should always be reported to the Democratic Services department at the Council. This enables the Council to undertake proper monitoring and decide if any action needs to be taken to prevent a similar incident reoccurring. You may also consider it advisable to warn ward colleagues.

## Mail

As with telephone calls, councillors on rare occasions can become the target of a malicious, anonymous letter.

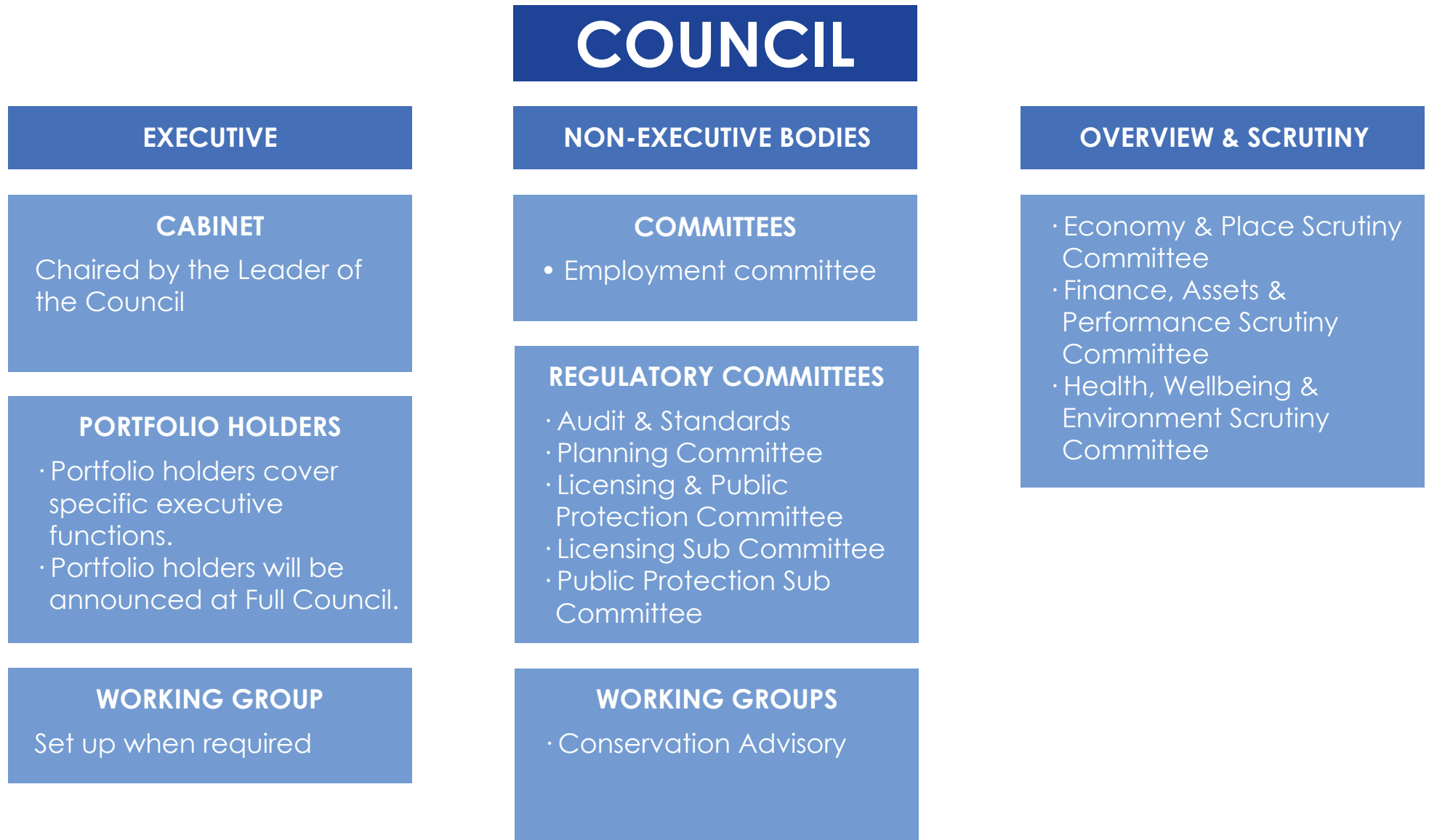
- Any mail received via the Council will be initially vetted for any concerning features however always take care to check all your mail for strange stamps, smells, liquid spillage marks, powders or items protruding from any packages.

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- If you are concerned about any package, carefully place it down, retreat and report, to the building manager / Police as applicable.

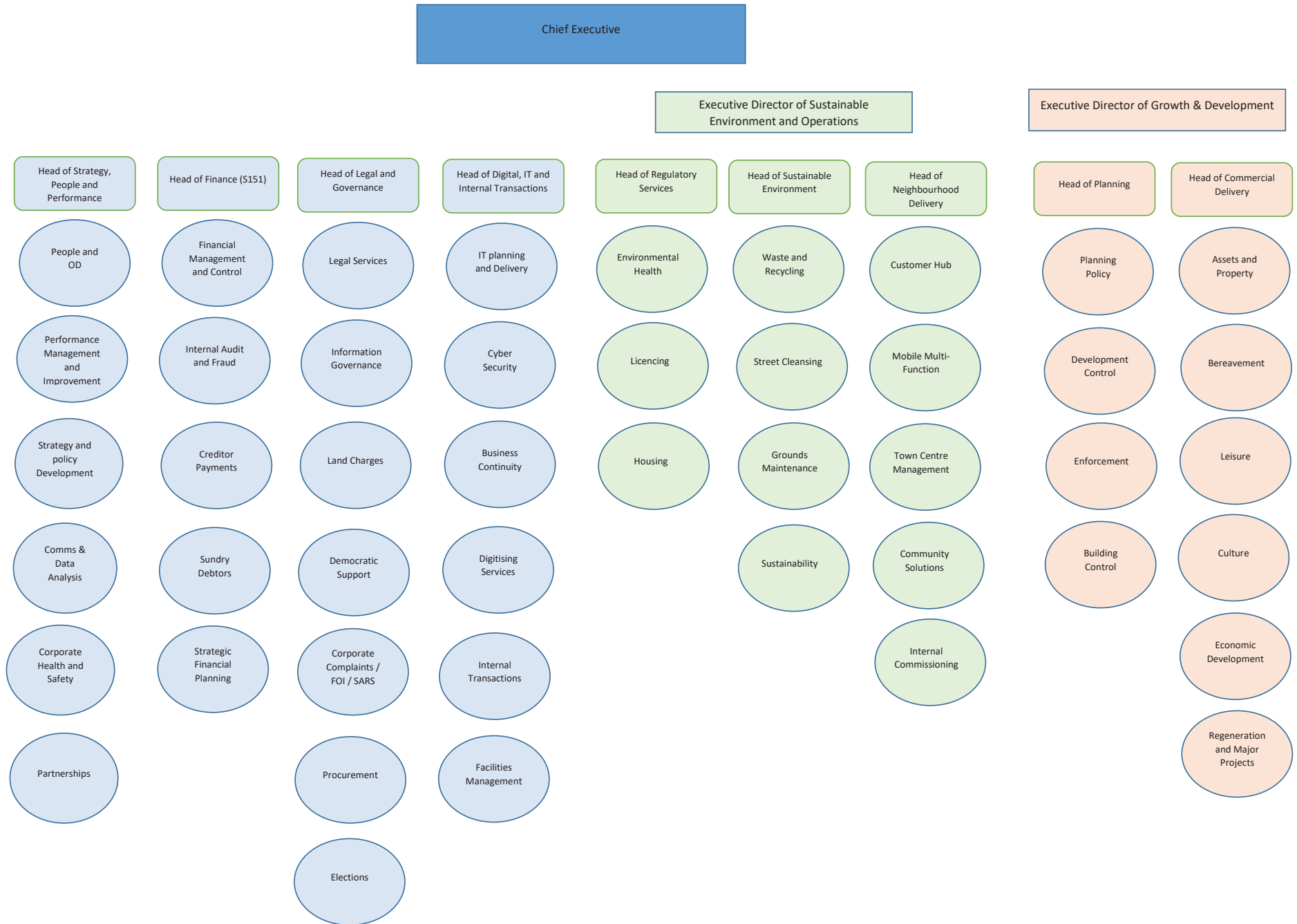
## Using social media

Councillors, officers and the Council itself use social media in distinct ways. However, there are some universal principles that should be kept in mind.

- Be human: be approachable in your language and tone; behave online as you would in person.
- Be engaging: respond to questions and join in when you can move the conversation on or help.
- Be professional: remember that you represent the Council, so be aware of how your public voice comes across.
- Share and attribute: you can share what others have posted but it is polite to acknowledge and attribute where this has come from.
- Go to where your audience is: if the people you want to connect with are on a particular platform, forum or group, join it.
- Content is key: by creating sharable and engaging content you can contribute to the conversation and be heard.
- The internet is forever: remember that what you post now could be found in years to come.
- It is prudent to avoid posting personal information on pages which are open to the public.
- Consider retaining private accounts with access restricted to friends and family only.
- Check your settings do not advertise your location.
- Where councillors experience negative behaviour or harassment on social media platforms they are encouraged to keep records of all incidents and ideally take screen shots of such communications.
- You may wish to ask for statements that are incorrect to be removed and apologies made, but always report to the social media safety platform and if applicable the Police as well. However it is sometimes better to ignore and not respond rather than request any alterations as this may elevate the aggression level.



# Organisational Structure Chart



## Direct

Main Switchboard .....	01782 717717
Staffordshire County Council .....	0300 111 8000
(Road or lighting faults)	
Emergency out-of-hours number .....	01782 615599

*For direct line dial '01782 74' before extension number*

## Extension

Martin Hamilton .....	Chief Executive .....	2100
Georgie Evans .....	Head of Strategy, People and Performance .....	2280
Sarah Wilkes .....	Head of Finance (\$151) .....	2119
Dan Dickinson .....	Head of Legal and Governance .....	2230
Jan Baddeley .....	Communications Manager .....	2605
Michelle Hopper .....	Senior Partnerships Officer .....	2597
Rosie Bloor .....	Customer and ICT Business Manager .....	2483
Denise French .....	Democratic Services Team Leader .....	2211
Geoff Durham .....	Mayor's Secretary/Member Support Officer .....	2222
Angela Hodkinson .....	Management Support Officer .....	2101
Stephanie Price .....	Elections Manager .....	2466

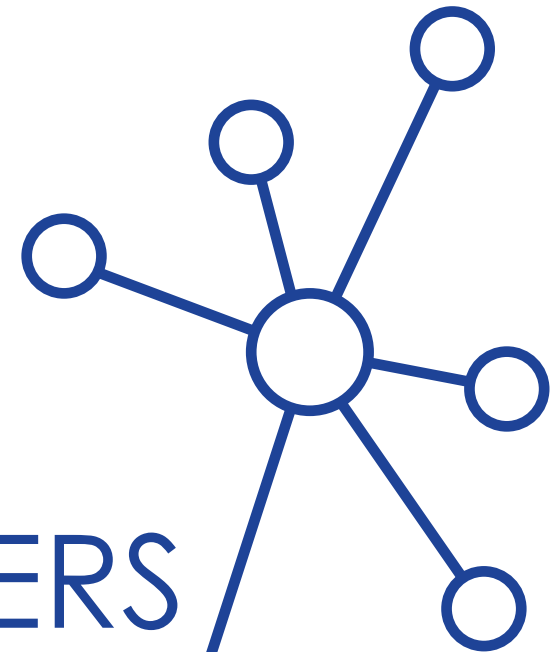


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Dave Adams	Director of Sustainable Environment	2549
Nesta Barker	Head of Regulatory Services	2732
Andrew Bird	Head of Sustainable Environment	2510
Roger Tait	Head of Neighbourhood Delivery	2706
Matthew Burton	Licensing Manager	2432
Steve Gee	Transport and Contracts Manager	2712
Andrew Arnott	Sport and Active Lifestyles Manager	2624
Delyth Copp	Culture and Arts Manager	2608
Teresa Mason	Culture and Arts Manager	2608
Rebecca Allen	Landscape and Community Manager	4634
Darren Green	Streetscene Business Manager	4760
David Beardmore	Environmental Health Team Manager	2559
Nigel Gardner	Environmental Health Team Manager	2551
Darren Walters	Environmental Health Team Manager	2587
Simon McEneny	Executive Director of Growth and Development	2400
Jeff Upton	Interim Head of Planning	2254
Jemma March	Planning Policy Business Manager	2477
Joanne Halliday	Head of Commercial Delivery	2451
Louise Beeby	Property Manager	2374

# INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS



The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) and its accompanying Civil Contingency Planning Regulations 2005 sets out a number of statutory obligations for responders. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is categorised as a Category 1 Responder and as such is subject to all the obligations under the CCA1.

A Major Incident or emergency may occur at any time of day or night.

It is vital that Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is prepared and can respond at short notice; often, but not exclusively, in support of the fire, police and ambulance services, providing a coordinated range of services to those involved, including victims, relatives, friends and our own staff.

The Council has established and approved an Incident Response Guide complemented by a Response and Recovery Handbook, Business Continuity Plans and other supporting plans.

The Incident Response Guide will be used by responding officers during an incident and has been designed to assist any response. The Response and Recovery Handbook outlines how the Council addresses its Civil Contingencies responsibilities and arrangements for response. It is intended to be read slow-time (that is not during an incident). The two documents together, replace the previous Major Incident Plan.

This guidance document is based on the aforementioned documents, and provides elected members with a summary of how incidents are managed and how members can assist in the Council's overall response.

It should ideally be read in conjunction with the Staffordshire Prepared Multi-Agency Incident Handbook (available on request from the Council's Emergency Planning Liaison Officer), and the Council's Response and Recovery Handbook (available on the Council's intranet in the Civil Contingencies section <http://svintranet/departments/communications/emergency-planning>).

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## Major Incident / Emergency

This is defined by the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 as:-

“An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK, the environment of a place in the UK, or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK”.

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is designated as a Category 1 responder. Category 1 responders include:-

- Local Authorities;
- Emergency Services (Police Forces, British Transport Police, Fire Authorities, Ambulance Services);
- National Health Service bodies (NHS England, Public Health England, Acute Trusts); and
- Government Agencies (The Environment Agency).

Further information on Major Incidents, Emergencies and terminology can be found in the Council's Response and Recovery Handbook. The Civil Contingencies Act places a number of duties on all Category 1 (and Category 2) Responders. Category 1 Responders are to:

- Assess local risks and use this to inform emergency planning.
- Put in place emergency plans.
- Put in place business continuity management arrangements.
- Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency.
- Share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination.
- Co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency.

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- Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (Local Authorities only).

To meet its obligations as a Category 1 responder under the Act, the Council has:-

- Entered into a partnership arrangement with the Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Unit, along with all other Category 1 Responders.
- Embedded its response & recovery arrangements into the overall response & recovery structure across Staffordshire.
- In conjunction with the Civil Contingencies Unit, developed a number of key documents, which detail the Council's roles and responsibilities in preparing for, responding to and recovering from an incident.
- Instigated a Civil Contingencies Working Group within the Council consisting of key officers to oversee the work of the Council in meeting its Civil Contingencies responsibilities.
- Nominated officers to undertake the incident response roles defined in the key documents.

## Role of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council in an incident

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A more comprehensive outline of the roles and responsibilities of Category 1 and 2 Responders under the CCA can be found in the Staffordshire Prepared Multi-Agency Major Incident Handbook. However, in the event of a Major Incident being declared, the role of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is primarily to:-

- (i) support the emergency services in their response to the incident.
- (ii) lead the recovery process where it is the lead local authority enabling a restoration to normality.
- (iii) maintain essential council services as far as is practicable.

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It is good practice to begin to consider the recovery process as early as practicable during an incident, and this will be initiated by the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG), which is the multi-agency group at “strategic” or Chief Executive level where the overall strategic direction for the incident response would take place. There will then come a point at which the Lead Responder during the Response Phase will hand over the overall lead to the Lead Local Authority for the recovery phase. However, in certain circumstances (such as some flooding events) a local authority may take the overall lead role from the very start.

In practice, the response of the Council is likely to consist of one or more of the following elements:-

To establish the appropriate teams and resources to manage the Council's response to, and recovery from, the incident.

- To establish the appropriate liaisons with other responders, both at the incident site(s) and with command centres, as required.
- Participation in the Strategic Coordinating Group and Tactical Coordinating Group as necessary.
- To alert and work with other local authorities as necessary.
- Alerting voluntary organisations as necessary (via the Civil Contingencies Unit), and coordinating their response.
- Liaising with Government Departments, public utilities and other organisations, as appropriate.
- Coordinating / providing required services for affected people, such as rest centres, transportation (for evacuation) and emergency feeding.
- Providing any operational support at the scene (such as drainage or cleansing in flooding or Environmental Health advice).
- Requesting military assistance in support of the Council, where necessary.
- Liaising with media officers from all other responding agencies to ensure a coordinated release of information to the media and information and advice to the public, as laid out in the Staffordshire Prepared Emergency Media and Communications Plan.
- Taking the lead role in the long term recovery and restoration of the affected area(s), where it is the lead Local Authority for recovery

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- By the implementation of the Council's Business Continuity Plans maintain, as far as is practicable, a normal service to the community whilst also ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Council personnel

It should be noted that the above will vary according to whether the Council is the lead Local Authority or is providing support to another Local Authority.

## Role of Councillors

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### General guidance

- The responding officers will notify members of an Incident or Major Incident as soon as is practicable. This may be by the Chief Executive/ Council Strategic Team directly, or delegated through Member Services as appropriate.
- The Chief Executive (or acting Chief Executive) has direct responsibility for briefing Members and keeping them up to date with regard to the incident whenever possible. They will also advise Members of any specific roles with which they may be able to assist.
- Members need to be aware of the Council's responsibilities in an incident - as outlined in this guidance.
- Members need to be guided by the trained officers, not act alone.
- Patience is vital, as often there is a period of confusion during the early stages of a Major Incident or Significant Incident, and information is usually limited during this period.
- If members have any specific skills, which they believe may be of use during the incident, they should advise the Chief Executive.
- Members may be able to assist in liaising with MPs, Ministers etc. The Chief Executive will advise accordingly.
- If members perform any role, relating to the incident, they will need to keep detailed records of any actions taken, as these may be required as part of any investigation / review carried out afterwards. For guidance on this, members can speak to any member of the Strategic Team or IMT. A council Log Sheet template is also available on the Council's intranet under Civil Contingencies/ Emergency Planning section.



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- It should also be remembered that, where circumstances permit, the Council will make every effort to maintain its normal day-to-day activities.

#### Roles for members in whose area(s) the Major Incident/ Incident has occurred

- All member involvement should be carried out in liaison with Strategic Team (or, when the Strategic Team is not in session, the Chief Executive).
- Local / specialist knowledge can be invaluable and of great assistance, so this may be called upon by the Council.
- Helping to identify vulnerable people (groups or individuals).
- Liaison with the Council's Communications Team to assist in providing channels of communication to and from the public.
- Exercise "community leadership." Possibly helping in rest centres and humanitarian assistance centres.

#### **PLEASE DO NOT**

- Get involved without first liaising with the Chief Executive.
- Take on tasks for which you are not trained as this may create confusion or be counterproductive (such as handling stressed people, media management etc.)
- Give out mixed messages / wrong information.
- Put yourself and / or others in danger.
- Adopt the role of trained officers.
- Issue individual / personal press statements without reference to the Communications Team.
- Jump to conclusions.

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- Make statements which imply failure or blame on the part of this or another local authority or any other organisation involved, as this often provides the basis for litigation after the event, which is all too common.

#### Lines of communication and arrangements for lower level incidents

- If members wish to report an issue or incident out of hours, they can call the out of hours service on 01782 615599. This emergency call-handling service is currently provided by Redditch Borough Council (RBC) and it is supported by a network of officers from key disciplines within the Council.
- During office hours members can report an incident to the Council's Customer Services Centre by calling 01782 717717 or the matter may be raised with an officer within the relevant service area, if known.
- If the incident is of, or escalates to, a sufficient level, the Director-on-Call may be notified via the Contact Centre or Executive Management Team (during normal office hours), or the out of hours service provided by RBC (out of hours).