

PART 15

GROUP LEADERS' PROTOCOL

WORCESTER CITY COUNCIL
GROUP LEADERS' PROTOCOL

1. Scope

- 1.1 This protocol shall be used to provide political stability at Worcester City Council and to assist in the management of the corporate governance of the Council, supporting the effective operation of the Committee system. These conventions reflect the agreement of the Political Groups as to the general conduct of Council business. This version of the protocol shall take effect from the date it is adopted at a meeting of the Council.
- 1.2 This protocol forms part of the Council's Constitution and it is intended that it remains in force until the Council resolves to amend or revoke it. It is intended to set out binding commitments but it shall always be read in conjunction with the Articles and other provisions of the Constitution. In the event of any conflict of interpretation, the Articles shall take precedence.
- 1.3 This protocol may be reviewed at any time at the request of any of the Political Groups and shall in any event be reviewed by Council at any time when the political balance of the Council changes.

2. The Leadership of the Council

- 2.1 The Leader(s) and Deputy Leader of the Council will be appointed annually by Council.
- 2.2 The responsibilities of the roles of Leader(s) and Deputy are as set out in the Articles. The Leader(s) of the Council (or Deputy when requested) will represent the Council at the Worcestershire Leaders' Board, the Local Enterprise Partnership and other external partnerships and boards which require leadership representation from the Council.
- 2.3 The basis of the appointments of Leader(s) and Deputy is determined by whether or not the Council is in overall political control.
- 2.4 In circumstances of overall political control:
- (a) there shall be one Leader, who will be appointed from the largest Political Group;
 - (b) there shall be one Deputy Leader, who may be appointed from any Political Group.
- 2.5 In circumstances of no overall political control:
- (a) the role of Leader shall be designated as "Joint Leaders";
 - (b) two Joint Leaders will be eligible to be appointed, one from each of the two largest Political Groups;
 - (c) the Council will appoint the first Joint Leader nominated from the largest Political Group, before appointing the second Joint Leader nominated from the next largest Political Group;
 - (d) the Joint Leaders will allocate their chairing and representation responsibilities on an alternating basis or as they may otherwise agree, so that overall an equitable share is achieved across the year;

- (e) where for any reason only one Joint Leader has been elected instead of two, the Joint Leader may ask the leader of any Political Group to deputise for them on an ad hoc basis when required.

4. Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees

- 4.1 The Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees will be appointed annually by Council in accordance with the following principles:
- The Chair and Vice Chair of each Committee will be from different Political Groups;
 - There shall be two Vice Chairs of the Policy and Resources Committee, each from different Political Groups and different to the Political Group of the Chair;
 - The roles of Chair and Vice Chair shall be allocated to Political Groups in proportion to the number of seats each Political Group has on the Council, subject to the rules on political balance.
- 4.2 The Chairs and Vice Chairs of all Committees shall be equally responsible for agenda setting for their Committee, with equal access to Officers and information. All other members of a Committee may request to the Chair and Vice Chair that an item is included on the agenda of the Committee. Statutory officers have the right to put an item on the agenda of any Committee and any member of the Council can request an item through the Monitoring Officer.
- 4.3 The draft agenda and contents of papers for Committee meetings are not for further circulation outside of the Council until they are formally published or unless the Managing Director has agreed.

5. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor

- 5.1 The Mayor and Deputy Mayor shall be appointed in accordance with the following principles:
- The Mayoralty shall rotate with a right of first refusal on an annual basis amongst the Political Groups;
 - The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor shall not be from the same Political Group;
 - The Mayor should normally have served at least one full term of office as a councillor;
 - The Mayor should normally have served as the Deputy Mayor in the preceding year;
 - The Mayor and Deputy Mayor must be willing to undertake the duties of Mayor and Deputy Mayor;
 - Where there is more than one eligible candidate for appointment as Mayor or Deputy Mayor, the appointment may be based on seniority in terms of number of years served as a councillor.

6. Distribution of Seats on Committees and Sub-committees

6.1 Seats on the Council's Committees are allocated on a proportionate basis in accordance with the political balance calculations.

7. Shared Services Joint Committees

7.1 Seats on the Joint Committees are allocated to constituent members on a pro-rata basis.

8. Political Group briefings with the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)

8.1 The leaders of the Political Groups and their deputies will meet with and receive briefings from CLT and other officers as frequently as required. The overall objective of these meetings and briefings is to support the effective management of the Committee system of governance and to supplement the agenda planning process of individual Committees.

8.2 Meetings will be chaired by the Council's Leader(s). Political Groups/CLT briefings are a non-decision making forum operating without delegated powers. Any formal decisions that are required will need to be referred to the relevant Committee. Meetings shall be held at least monthly to a pre-agreed schedule.

8.3 It has been a long-standing convention that Political Groups/CLT meetings are confidential and that agendas and reports from these briefings will not be available to anyone other than those attending the meeting. Furthermore, items on the agenda are not to be the subject of press comment without prior agreement of the Managing Director.

9. Media and Communications; Resources

9.1 The Leader and the Deputy Leader, or Joint Leaders as the case may be, have the authority to speak on behalf of the Council in relation to media enquiries, with advice from the Council's Communications Team and CLT.

9.2 Press releases are to be prepared by the Council's Communications Team in consultation with the Chair and the Vice Chair of the relevant Committee working together, and in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader/Joint Leaders where appropriate, the overall objective being to achieve an equitable level of coverage between Political Groups across the year.

9.3 Where a member of a Political Group chooses to speak to the media in relation to Council business, the member must make it clear in which capacity they are speaking.

9.4 Communications from central government and other public sector partners, the Local Government Association and invitations to external events (i.e. LGA conference, SOLACE etc.) shall be shared with the leaders of all of the Political Groups.

9.5 When there is no overall political control, the following principles for media briefings, press releases and publications will be applied:

- Media briefings and press releases will be shared on an equal and fair basis;

- Media briefings and press releases should, wherever possible, include a quotation which is agreed by the Joint Leaders, or Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant Committee as appropriate;
- Broadcast media may only have an opportunity for one spokesperson on a particular matter. Such opportunities shall be offered by the Communications Team on a rotational basis;
- the Joint Leaders shall have an equal right to coverage in City Life Magazine. The Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees shall, following consultation with the Joint Leaders, be entitled to coverage in City Life Magazine.

9.6 When there is no overall political control, the Joint Leaders shall have an equal right to the use of office accommodation at the Guildhall and an equal right to administrative support in the discharge of their duties.

10. Corporate priorities and initiatives

10.1 The Political Groups shall work collaboratively on existing corporate priorities and initiatives where there is common ground.

10.2 The Political Groups shall work together to identify and agree new initiatives and priorities where there is a common interest.

11. Code of Conduct

11.1 This agreement is intended to emphasise the importance of the Member/Officer Protocol and the Local Code of Conduct for Members. The leaders of the Political Group personally support the rigorous enforcement of high standards of Member conduct.

Signatories

In recognition of the need to maintain political stability at Worcester City Council and to assist in the management of the corporate governance of the Council, we the undersigned shall uphold these conventions.

Signed by	Signed by	Signed by	Signed by
Cllr Lynn Denham Labour Party	Cllr Marjory Bisset Green Party	Cllr James Stanley Conservative Party	Cllr Mel Allcott Liberal Democrats
Date	Date	Date	Date