

# **Local Protocol – External Advisors to Political Groups**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Political Groups provide the basis for effective overview and scrutiny of Executive functions, and are integral to decision making by Full Council.
- 1.2 This protocol supports the functioning of the Political Groups, by allowing them to compliment the skills and experience of the Group with the appointment of external advisors to provide them with advice and guidance.

## 2. Appointment and withdrawal of Advisors

- 2.1 The Group Leader will identify how they wish to recruit to the role of external advisor. The Group Leader shall consult with the Chief Executive in respect of any proposed appointment, including providing a CV for the proposed external advisor, and will not offer the role to an individual if the Chief Executive objects.
- 2.3 Appointments will be confirmed in writing by the Chief Executive. External Advisors will be appointed to coincide with political terms of office and the number of external advisors shall be limited to three per group.
- 2.4 Appointments will be merit based. In addition, advisors will have appropriate skills and experience relevant to the functions for example:
  - a) boardroom experience and strategic thinking;
  - b) a business background;
  - c) experience in the health or wellbeing sector;
  - d) experience in education;
  - e) experience in social care;
  - f) experience of community engagement;
  - d) recent and relevant commercial expertise;
  - e) experience of company management;
  - f) experience in finance and management accounting; and
  - g) other relevant experience.
- 2.5 The Chief Executive (or his/her deputy in his/her absence) may subsequently withdraw appointments if he/she considers this Protocol has been breached by an External Advisor.
- 2.6 The Council will not reimburse any expenses incurred by external advisors. Political Groups will be responsible for agreeing and reimbursing expenses (including parking in Council car parks) to external advisors whilst carrying out their role on behalf of the group.
- 2.7 External advisors will be provided with an ID card and will have access to the relevant Political Group room within Torquay Town Hall only.

### 3. Role of Advisors

- 3.1 External Advisors to the Political Groups can play an important role in providing guidance and advice to the political groups. The advisors can contribute to the mixture of skills within the Groups and bring relevant expertise, local representation and independence.
- 3.2 Advisors are expected to demonstrate the following personal skills and competencies:
- a) drive, vision, independence and confidence;
  - b) challenging and proactive approach to committee business;
  - c) ability to motivate and engender respect;
  - d) negotiating and communication;
  - e) impartiality and integrity;
  - f) interpersonal skills – the ability to develop good relations;
  - g) ability to work as a team member and to be supportive of colleagues;
  - h) ability to make a constructive contribution to group discussion e.g. able to give a clear expression of ideas;
  - i) analytical approach to problem solving;
  - j) ability to formulate strategy; and
  - k) have a grasp of priorities.
- 3.3 The external advisors are not subject to the Code of Conduct for Members and are not required to register their interests. However, advisors must ensure that they do not unfairly seek to secure an advantage or disadvantage for any person.
- 3.4 Advisors shall consider whether they have individual interests on matters being considered by the Group and declare such interests (including details of those interests). When an advisor has declared an interest, this should be recorded by the Group Leader, and the Group Leader will determine whether it is appropriate for the advisor to remain in any discussions.
- 3.5 Whilst carrying out their duties, the advisors shall:
- a) promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person (including grounds of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or age);
  - b) treat others with respect; and
  - c) not do anything which compromises or which is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of the Council.
- 3.6 An advisor must **not** disclose information given to him/her in confidence by anyone, or information acquired which he/she believes is of a confidential nature, without the

consent of the Council's Monitoring Officer, or unless he/she is required by law to do so. Advisors access to exempt or confidential reports shall be at the discretion of the Chief Executive. External Advisors are required to sign a confidential agreement upon their appointment and will be reminded of the requirements of this Protocol when given confidential/exempt information.

3.7 It may be appropriate for external advisors to attend internal informal meetings. Prior consent from the Council's Monitoring Officer or relevant Director shall be obtained before attending such meetings.

#### **4. Role of Senior Council Officers**

- 4.1 The role of Senior Council Officers is to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the Council, these duties are outlined in the Officer Scheme of Delegation. They are non-political and duty bound to provide professional advice.
- 4.2 The External Advisors to Political Groups shall not seek to interfere directly in the day to day management of the Council. They shall not have access to officers, or place any demands upon officers.

#### **5. Training on the Functions of the Executive**

- 5.1 The External Advisors will be included, at the discretion of the Head of Governance Support, within the training provided to Members, to ensure that they are aware of the Council's powers, duties and decision making processes.