

## **Nottinghamshire County Council**

### **Councillors and Co-opted members – Protocol for Use of Resources**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This protocol provides rules on the use of Council resources in relation to your role as a Councillor.

The Council provides a range of support services and facilities to enable Councillors to carry out their duties. The full range of resources available and rules regarding use are set out in the **Schedule** attached to this protocol.

#### **2. COUNCIL BUSINESS – WHEN THIS PROTOCOL APPLIES**

Councillors may use Council facilities and resources in connection with the following Council business:

- Matters relating to the decision making process of the Council, e.g. Council and committee meetings
- Representing the Council on an outside body
- Holding division surgeries
- Meeting, communicating with and dealing with correspondence from residents, other Councillors, officers, Government officials, MPs etc. in connection with Council business
- Matters for discussion by a political group of the Council, so long as it relates mainly to the work of the Council and not your political party or group

#### **3. PRINCIPLES FOR USE OF RESOURCES**

- Councillors must be mindful of Council resources and must always seek to conduct business in the most cost effective way. Councillors must have regard to the need to ensure prudent and reasonable use of resources and value for money.
- Party political activities or individual campaigning do not form part of Council business and the Council's resources must not be used for these activities. This includes Council email addresses. The Council is prohibited by law from publishing any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party or an individual Councillor, or to highlight their achievements.

- Use of resources for the purpose of representing individuals or small groups of residents is acceptable. However, high volume use of resources including sending out circulars and conducting wide-scale consultation exercises is not acceptable, even though these may involve Council business.
- In the interests of economy and the environment, Councillors are requested to use e-mail, or to hand-deliver, instead of using post wherever possible.
- Governance and Ethics Committee is responsible for oversight of use of resources including review of postage and photocopying costs incurred by individual Councillors and political groups. Committee is also responsible for considering requests for exceptions to be made. Committee reserves the right to charge Councillors for excessive use.

## SCHEDULE

### **Equipment and Resources for Councillors**

**ICT Equipment** - you will be provided with appropriate equipment for your full term of office.

If you have been provided with a smartphone, you will have access to unlimited calls and texts to standard numbers and an unlimited data allowance. Your tablet device may have a SIM card which you can use to connect to the network when WiFi is not otherwise available.

Phone calls from your smart phone to or from abroad will incur additional phone charges which you may be required to cover.

You will be reminded of the terms and conditions around the appropriate use of these devices during your induction training.

On receipt of equipment Councillors are required to confirm that they have read the ICT Guidance and Acceptable Use Standard.

Support for technical matters is supplied by the Council's ICT helpdesk. User training is available on the intranet via the Members Hub.

**Arrangements for incoming mail** – you will have a pigeonhole, located within your relevant group area (where applicable) for meeting papers and any mail sent to you at County Hall. Mail should be collected wherever possible but if you are not expected to be at County Hall for some time then you can ask for mail to be sent to your home address. Please discuss your specific requirements with your group researcher.

**Arrangements for outgoing mail** – there will be an outgoing mail tray located within your relevant group area (where applicable); this is the only mail tray you should use. The Council's corporate letter templates and window envelopes **must** be used in order to enable mail to be franked. If mail cannot be franked it is more expensive to post. Unless there are exceptional circumstances postage will be second class. Councillors should be economical in their use of post; volume use (anything in excess of 50 items) is not acceptable unless approved in advance by Governance and Ethics Committee. Use email or hand-deliver instead where possible. The Post Room reserves the right to open any post to ensure policies are being adhered to.

**Stationery** - a limited range of stationery is available from either your group researcher or Democratic Services. Stationery must not be adapted to include political logos. Photographs can be included but must be printed in black and white. The Multi-Function Devices are regularly re-stocked with printer paper; you should contact Facilities to re-stock if necessary rather than taking paper from other locations in the building; this is to ensure proper reporting to Governance and Ethics Committee regarding volumes used.

**Printing**– Photo security passes will enable you to print, scan and photocopy from the Multi-Function Devices located around County Hall. These will be the only printing facilities available, with the exception of Central Print. This is in order to ensure to ensure proper reporting to Governance and Ethics Committee regarding volumes used. In the interests of transparency and cost-effectiveness these facilities are only available when security passes as used. In accordance with the Council's Print Strategy **high volume copying and printing (any job involving 99 plus sides of paper) must be sent to Central Print as this is the cheapest option**. Due to the high costs associated with colour printing, you should always print /copy in black and white unless colour is required to enable the document to be understood. Councillors should be economical in their use of print.

**Business Cards** can be obtained from Democratic Services. You may request a supply of 500 cards to cover your full term of office. These cards should only include contact details for County Hall, to prevent any subsequent changes being required.

**Room Hire for Surgeries** – for your constituency surgeries you should seek to use meeting rooms that do not incur a charge to the Council. These can include community facilities and some Council premises. If no suitable premises are available an application for the cost of hiring an alternative venue will need to be approved by Governance and Ethics Committee

**Disclosure and Barring Service checks** – to undertake your role as a Councillor you need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Democratic Services will contact you about the process and documentation required to complete an electronic DBS application form. You may have a current DBS check, however there are very limited circumstances in which checks can be transferred. Democratic Services will advise you on this issue.

**Nottingham City Transport Cards** - a limited number of Nottingham City Transport Cards for official business travel on City buses are available for staff and Councillors from Reception at County Hall. These must be signed for and returned to County Hall reception after each use. At all times your chosen method of travel must be the most cost effective method, taking into account the value of time saved, anticipated subsistence and other expenses and any other relevant matters. More details are available in the Travel and Accommodation Policy.

**Conferences** – attendance at conferences, seminars and training events for which a fee is payable must be approved in advance by the relevant committee.

## **County Hall Essential Information**

**County Hall** is open Monday to Friday, usually 6.30am to 6.30pm. The building is also usually open on Saturdays from 8.00am to 1pm. If you intend to continue working in an office after 6.30pm, you should inform the Facilities office on extension 73316.

**Security pass.** Security is very important and you should wear your pass at all times on a County Council lanyard as you may be asked for identification. Your pass will operate the car park barrier, the reception barriers and the doors to secure areas of the County Hall campus.

Each card is individually programmed to provide access to particular areas in the building and will also enable you to scan, copy and print from the large machines around the building (called Multi-Function Devices or MFDs).

**Car Parking** spaces for Councillors' exclusive use in connection with Council business are available in the Members' Car Park on the River Trent frontage. Drive around to the rear of County Hall and present your security pass at the barrier to allow access to this area. Unless you are on Council business you should pay for parking at times when members of the public are required to pay to use the Car Park, for example during cricket and football matches.

**Office Accommodation** is provided for Councillors' use. There are currently suites of rooms on the ground and first floors at County Hall. The allocation of accommodation will be confirmed as soon as possible after the election, after consultation with the political groups.

**Confidential Waste** bins are provided in all work areas for secure disposal of confidential or sensitive documents. Recycling bins are also provided.

**Meeting rooms** – meetings involving Councillors will usually be held in

Council Chamber	- main building, floor 1.
Committee rooms A, B & C	- main building, ground floor.
Rufford Suite	- Riverside block, floor 1.
Civic Suite	- Riverside block, ground floor.

**Lifts** are available to all floors within County Hall. There is also a wheelchair lift to the Rufford Suite and Riverview Restaurant.

**Catering facilities** are available. Rolls, beverages and other snacks can be bought from the snack bar in Reception. The Riverview restaurant in the Riverside block serves hot meals and sandwiches. Councillors are entitled to complementary drinks from within their group accommodation or from the snack bar.

**Visitors** to County Hall must sign in at the reception desk in the entrance foyer; all visitors will be provided with a temporary pass. They should sign out and return the pass on leaving the building.

**Fire Alarms** are tested at 10.00am on the first Wednesday of every month. A continuous ring signals the fire alarm and an intermittent ring signals a bomb alert. If you hear the alarm bell you must vacate the building at the nearest fire exit. Please make yourself aware of these with the posters placed around County Hall and be aware of the relevant assembly points.