

Protocol Agreement between Corby Borough Council and recognised Neighbourhood Associations

Preamble

It is recognised that the working relationship between Neighbourhood Associations and their local Elected Members is vital to ensure that improvements may be made to the quality of life of residents or those working in their respective areas.

The working relationship between Associations, Elected Members and Council officers is generally constructive and conducted in a spirit of working for the common good of their local communities. The purpose of this Protocol is to strengthen that partnership and ensure that the good working relationship continues.

Attendance at Association Meetings by Elected Members

Elected Members (unless members of an Association in their own right) attend Association meetings by invitation.

Attendance at Association meetings are a way of assisting in the issues and concerns of residents receiving proper attention and that Council activity within the locality is reported.

Elected Members should observe the rules of conduct expected of attendees at Association meetings; any comments or responses made by the Elected Member should be directed via the chair of the meeting.

Equally, Elected Members are the duly elected representatives of their respective wards and should be treated with appropriate courtesy within the normal rules governing the conduct of meetings.

Prospective candidates in an election have no automatic entitlement to attend Association meetings. If an Association wishes to invite prospective candidates to their meeting this invitation needs to be extended to all candidates standing in that particular locality.

Estate Walkabouts

It is recognised that particularly during pre-election periods (also known as “election purdah”) that there are certain additional obligations on local authorities to avoid directly or indirectly seeming to support or detract from the campaigns of candidates or parties.

It is therefore suggested that during the pre-election period (from Notice of Election until Close of Poll) that all estate walkabouts be rescheduled where possible unless it is operationally necessary for the original timetable to be adhered to.

If a walkabout is rescheduled, in order not to fall within the pre-election period, Associations would still be able to raise relevant issues with Council officers or their respective Elected Members during this period.

Association Newsletters

Association Newsletters may give the contact details of their respective Elected Members; this may also include details of any ward surgery organised by an Elected

Member. During pre-election periods for parish, borough or county elections no information should be included.

Elected Members may, outside of election periods, submit copy for inclusion in the Associations Newsletters but editorial control remains with the Association. Any piece submitted should not be party political and should be objective in nature providing information to local residents.

Ward Surgery

The conduct and organisation of a Ward Surgery is the responsibility of the respective Elected Member(s). The Association may provide details to local residents of the time, date and location of any surgery held but is not responsible for its conduct or organisation.

An Elected Member may wish to hold a Ward Surgery prior to or after an Association meeting. Out of courtesy the Elected Member should notify the Association if this is the case.

An Elected Member's Ward Surgery should not impact, detract or interfere with the conduct of Association meetings or business and should be conducted in a way where it is clearly demarcated from Association activity.

Hustings

It is recognised that Neighbourhood Associations may wish to organise Hustings during an Election Period in order that their members have an opportunity to meet and question candidates standing in their area. Deciding whether to hold a Hustings event is a matter to be determined by each respective Association; there is no obligation to organise such an event. Associations would not be able to utilise the grant funding from the Council to pay for the venue, organisation or promotion of any Hustings event.

It is important that any Hustings event does not favour or disadvantage a particular candidate or party. All registered candidates should be invited to attend. Where it is known in advance that elections are to be held, and an Association determines to hold a Hustings event, the date, time and venue of that event should be advertised in advance and made known to prospective candidates and parties as soon as possible.

The Electoral Commission have issued a good practise guide to those considering holding Hustings events; this guide should be followed in order to avoid challenge.

Association Constitution

Under the Association's Constitution Elected Members of Corby Borough Council may not hold office. This does not preclude them being members or associate members of the Association if they meet the appropriate eligibility criteria.

Redress

If an Elected Member or an Association feel that there has been a potential breach of this protocol the matter may be referred to the Council's Monitoring Officer (Paul Goult) or the Assistant Chief Executive (Angela Warburton).