

Councillor Role Descriptions

Councillors come from all walks of life bringing a rich variety of experience into their role of representing local communities. Given the variety of backgrounds, councillors will naturally fulfil this role in slightly different ways.

This document provides a set of role descriptions for elected members in Bath and North East Somerset Council. It has been written to provide clarity for councillors about their roles and responsibilities. It will also help officers, partner organisations and the public better understand what is expected of a councillor and of members with specific roles.

Role descriptions are provided for the following:

- Councillor
- Cabinet member
- Cabinet Project Lead
- Leader of the Council
- Deputy leader of the Council
- Chair of the Council
- Chair of a Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
- Member of a Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
- Chair of a Regulatory Committee
- Member of a Regulatory Committee

The role descriptions are underpinned by the Council's values. Whilst change is inevitable, our values should act as a constant over the coming years. These strongly influence what we do, how we approach our work and the type of Council we want to be. Overall, our values give the guidance and clarity that we all commit to a common code of practice and demonstrate these qualities when carrying out our roles and responsibilities as councillors and officers. We believe our collective aspirations and positive action will help us to successfully achieve our vision.

The core values of Bath and North East Somerset Council and Bath and North East Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group are:



Role Description for All Councillors

1. Accountabilities

- To full Council
- To the electorate of their ward
- To their political group (if applicable)

2. Roles and activities

a) Representing and supporting citizens and communities

- *Communicate and engage* with local constituents and groups
- *Undertake casework and act as an advocate* in resolving concerns or grievances
- *Understand the shape and feel of the local area*, including its local assets, needs and inequalities in fields such as housing, health and wellbeing, employment, education, transport, care, and community cohesion
- *Liaise with the Council and partner organisations* to ensure that the needs of the local communities are identified, understood and supported
- *Represent and sensibly champion* the interests and needs of local residents and communities within the Council and other agencies
- *Communicate using all types of media*, ensuring adherence to corporate guidance for internet and social media usage, and taking into account different needs of different audiences
- *To be vigilant and do everything possible to protect* adults and children at risk from abuse
- *Promote tolerance and cohesion* in local communities

b) Working across the ward strengthening partnerships with citizens and others

- *Maintain and develop networks* with a wide range of agencies, officers, fellow councillors and local communities to deliver better outcomes for local people
- *Help foster new relationships* between local people, communities and agencies to encourage local development and to find new solutions to local issues
- *Liaise effectively* with Parish Councils in the ward
- *Enable* local people and communities to find the tools and support to self-organise
- *Honestly manage the expectations* that local residents and communities may have of the Council

c) Linking the Council and citizens

- *Be a channel of communication* to local residents and communities on Council strategies, policies, services and procedures
- *Participate in decisions and activities* reserved for the full Council, e.g., setting budgets and strategic policy framework seeking to mitigate the impact of austerity on citizens
- *Translate for communities a shift in the role of the Council*, and in the relationship between the Council and citizens
- *Have an awareness of the complexity of the system* in which the council operates and be able to explain this to citizens
- *Understand the remit and limitations of officer roles*, and work with officers in a co-productive and solution focused way that seeks to avoid blame, as set out in the Councillor/Officer protocol; [Constitution part 4.1 protocol on councillor / officer relations](#)
- *Recognize and adapt* to changing roles and be flexible in ways of working with officers
- *Critically analyse* complex data and information and make it accessible for citizens

d) Representing the council

- *Work with partners and outside bodies* as a representative of the Council
- *Understand and communicate the vision and changing direction of the Council* with local people, communities and partner organisations in your ward
- *Act in a way that is consistent* with overarching policy, principles and direction of the Council
- *Help others feel pride* in the purpose of the organisation
- *Be a member of and contribute to* the local Area Forum

e) Governance and decision making

- *Inform the debate* at full Council meetings and contribute to the formation and scrutiny of the Council's policies, budget, strategies and service delivery
- *Participate in informed and balanced decision making* on committees and panels to which the councillor might be appointed, helping to ensure that decision making is consistent with local needs and takes account of inequalities in outcomes between communities
- *Read all paperwork before* attending meetings
- *Take corporate responsibility* for the protection of vulnerable children and adults
- *Act within the budgetary framework* of the council
- *Promote and ensure efficiency and effectiveness* in the provision of council services

3. Personal and role development

- *Develop and maintain a working knowledge of the Council's policies and practices* in order to make well informed decisions at meetings
- *Take personal responsibility for your personal development* to build understanding, knowledge and skills to ensure that the role is undertaken effectively
- *Review and complete the self-reflection sections within the LGA Political Skills Framework* to identify strengths and areas for development
- *Participate in member development opportunities* made available to Councillors
- *Complete core and mandatory training and development, and member induction, within recommended timescales.* This will include attending sessions and completing e-learning
- *Demonstrate and embed the core values* within all communications and interactions with colleagues, officers and the community
- *Actively participate in a skills audit* to determine individual and group needs and areas of strength and development
- *Promote the policies, activities and decisions of the Council* to residents, stakeholders, partners and the media recognising at all times the requirement to act in a manner consistent with the Nolan Principles of public life and the Council's Code of Conduct ([section 4.2 of the Constitution](#)) in a way which does not bring the Council or administration into disrepute through inappropriate actions, pronouncements or language
- *Declare any potential conflict of interest* (when a member's personal or business interests affects their ability to act fairly in the best interests of residents)

Role Description for Cabinet Members

This role description identifies the responsibilities specific to the role of Cabinet member and should be read in conjunction with the role description of all councillors.

1. Accountabilities

- To the Leader
- To the Cabinet (through collective responsibility)
- To Full Council

2. Roles and Activities

a) Acting as Portfolio Holder

- *Take prime responsibility* for the delivery of manifesto commitments and political priorities relating to the portfolio area
- *Give political direction* to officers working within the portfolio (through the Directors)
- *Provide strategic policy direction* and political and community leadership to the portfolio
- *Be accountable* for choices and performance in the portfolio
- *Have an overview* of the performance management, efficiency and effectiveness of the portfolio
- *Attend Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel meetings* if requested in connection with any issues associated with the portfolio, and consider scrutiny reports as required
- *Work with colleague Cabinet Members* on shared policy and project developments
- *Deal with outside bodies* in relation to portfolio responsibilities
- *Deal with the media* on issues relating to the portfolio
- *Make executive decisions* within the Portfolio (except for those executive decisions reserved to the Cabinet Members serving on the Health & Care Board)

b) Acting as Cabinet Member

- *Participate effectively as a Cabinet Member*, taking joint responsibility and being collectively accountable for decisions made and actions taken
- *Promote the principles of collective responsibility* and to work within these as a Cabinet Member
- *Recognise and contribute to* issues which cut across portfolios or are issues of collective responsibility
- *Understand and communicate policy and Council positions* to residents, media, and other stakeholders
- *Promote the 'Residents First' ethos*

3. Personal and role development

- As for 'All Councillors' plus:
- *Ensure up to date knowledge* of portfolio-related developments and policies at national and local level
- *Attend relevant briefings* for your portfolio area as required

B&NES Role Description for Cabinet Project Lead

This role description identifies the responsibilities specific to the role of Cabinet Project Leads and should be read in conjunction with the role description of all councillors. In addition, the role will recognise the executive and constitutional authority and accountability of the relevant Cabinet Member.

This role will assist delivery of the Cabinet's transformational and ongoing work programme by supporting the Cabinet as a whole and an individual Cabinet Member with his/her portfolio workload.

1. Accountabilities

- To the Leader, who will also determine issues of capacity and priority;
- To the relevant Cabinet Member

2. Roles and Activities

- Develop and lead projects, as designated by the Cabinet Member, from concept design, through delivery to completion
- Undertake research relating to the specific project or other relevant matters within a Cabinet Member's Portfolio area
- Assist in the development of policies both in terms of the Cabinet as a whole and within the Cabinet Member's Portfolio area
- Help to promote specific media opportunities relating to key projects, with regular feedback to the Cabinet Member
- Attend seminars and meetings as requested by the Leader/Cabinet Member
- Liaise with non-executive members and senior officers to ensure that the Cabinet/Cabinet Member is fully aware of issues which are of concern to them
- Assist the Cabinet Member in establishing and maintaining professional, effective, and efficient working relationships with opposition groups, Chairs of Committees/Panels and Senior Officers
- Work with other Cabinet Members and Cabinet Project Leads on shared policy and project developments
- Liaise with outside bodies, partner organisations, service users and members of the public in relation to specific projects and other portfolio responsibilities
- Provide support for championing the vision and interests of the Cabinet and of specific projects
- In the context of projects allocated, to act as an advocate for services within a Cabinet Member's portfolio
- Assist the Cabinet Member to manage their workload and deal with such issues or projects (whether long-term or time limited) as shall be agreed with them (recognising the Leader's role in managing issues of capacity and priority.)

3. Personal and role development

- Be responsible for personal development and undergo appropriate development and continuous improvement through any appropriate means, including such mentoring support arrangements as the Council (through the Leader) may provide.

4. Role Restrictions

A Cabinet Project Lead cannot:

- Take formal decisions at Cabinet meetings or make Single Member Decisions
- Deputise for a Cabinet Member at full Council or Cabinet meetings
- Be a member of the Scrutiny Committee which scrutinises his or her Cabinet Member's portfolio

Role Description for the Leader of the Council

This role description identifies the responsibilities specific to the role of Leader of the Council and should be read in conjunction with the role descriptions of all councillors and of cabinet members.

1. Accountabilities

- To full Council
- To the public

2. Roles and Activities

a) Leadership and direction

- *Provide strategic political leadership and direction* for the Council, and be the Council's principal political spokesperson
- *Lead the formation of the Council's vision* for the area of Bath and North East Somerset that reflects the needs, assets and inequalities of the area; and the financial context facing the local authority
- *Provide leadership in building a political consensus* around Council policies
- *Lead in developing the Council's partnerships* with local communities, businesses, voluntary sector, health sector, education, and other local and national organisations
- *Represent the Council* in sub-regional, regional and national bodies as appropriate
- *Lead on the development* of the Council's strategic budget and policy framework and lead on decision making on cross-cutting issues
- *Provide strong, clear leadership* in the co-ordination of policies, strategies and service delivery
- *Develop and maintain good relationships* with the Chief Executive and other senior officers to aid the delivery of effective services
- *Ensure effective liaison* with other political groups within the Council
- *Ensure that you role model the council values* and encourage all cabinet members to embed in their work and behaviour and lead by example

b) Cabinet

- *Appoint* the Cabinet and designate appropriate portfolios
- *Appoint* the Deputy Leader
- *Lead and chair the Cabinet*, effectively manage its forward work programme, and ensure its overall effectiveness
- *Ensure that the work* of the Cabinet meets national policy objectives
- *Work with other portfolio holders to ensure effective delivery* of services within their portfolios against the policies of the Council and ensure the delivery of the Cabinet's responsibilities
- *Ensure that the Cabinet manages the business of the Council* within the financial limits set by the Council
- *Ensure effective communication and explanation* of all Cabinet's decisions and recommendations to Council and the public

3. Personal and role development

- As for 'All councillors'

Role Description for the Deputy Leader of the Council

This role description identifies the responsibilities specific to the role of Deputy Leader of the Council and should be read in conjunction with the role descriptions for the Leader of the Council and for all councillors.

1. Accountabilities

- To full Council
- To the public
- To the Leader of the Council

2. Roles and Activities

- *Assist and work with the Leader of the Council* to provide effective political leadership and strategic direction for the council
- *Assist and work with the Leader of the Council* in delivering their responsibilities to the Council as set out within the Leader's Role Profile
- *Deputise for the Leader of the Cabinet* in their absence from Council and Cabinet meetings
- *In the absence of the Leader of the Council, carry out the requirements of their Role Profile* so far as legally possible and permissible
- *Carry out other such duties* and undertake portfolio responsibility as delegated by the Leader of the Council

3. Personal and role development

- As for 'All councillors'

Role Description for the Chair of the Council

The role description as set out below is in addition to the Chair's role as a Councillor, and should be read in addition to this role description.

1. Accountabilities

- Full Council

2. Role Purpose and Activity

a) Acting as a symbol of the Council's democratic authority

- *Be the principal spokesperson* representing the Council on civic and ceremonial occasions, as outlined in the Chair's Civic Handbook
- *Be politically impartial* and uphold the democratic values of the Council
- *Act as an ambassador* for the Council

b) Chairing Council meetings

- *Chair Council meetings impartially* and ensure its business is carried out efficiently and in line with the Constitution
- *Ensure that matters of concern* to local communities can be debated by their ward Councillors

c) Governance, ethical standards and relationships

- *Ensure the Constitution is adhered to* and, if necessary, to rule on the interpretation of the Constitution
- *Work with officers to keep the Constitution under review* to ensure it is relevant to the Council's needs
- *Offer support and advice* to Members of the Council
- *Promote and support good governance* of the Council and its affairs
- *Provide community leadership and promote active citizenship*, fostering community pride and promoting public involvement in the Council's activities
- *Promote and support* open and transparent government

d) Work programming

- *Ensure the Council works to an annual work programme* to meet its legal obligations (e.g. setting the budget and the Council Tax and making appointments)

3. Personal and role development

- As for 'All councillors'

Role Description for a Chair of a Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

The chairs of Policy, Development and Scrutiny panels ensure that the scrutiny process is conducted robustly and with equity of treatment for the many parties and interests involved. This role description identifies the responsibilities specific to the role of the chair of such a panel and should be read in conjunction with the role description for all councillors.

1. Accountabilities

- To full Council
- To the public
- To the Policy Development and Scrutiny (PDS) panel

2. Roles and Activities

a) Leadership and direction

- *Regularly attend* the Chairs and Vice Chairs meetings
- *Promote the role of PDS panels* within the Council
- *Promote the role of PDS panels* to the public and other agencies, helping them to understand and engage with the scrutiny function
- *Provide confident and effective chairing of the relevant PDS panel* to ensure effective contributions from each member and clear decision making
- *Co-ordinate the activities* of the PDS panel and take a lead role in its work
- *Contribute effectively to the scrutiny process* by ensuring the questioning of the relevant Cabinet Member/Officer on the development and performance of policy and strategy
- *Demonstrate an objective and evidence-based approach to scrutiny*, ensuring that scrutiny enquiries are methodologically sound, and consider a wide range of evidence and perspectives
- *Lead joint scrutiny activities* with other authorities or organisations when required
- *Develop a constructive relationship* with the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders
- *Develop a constructive relationship* with the corporate directors/ directors/heads of service in the areas that the PDS panel scrutinises
- *Promote transparency and opportunities* for public engagement in scrutiny
- *Ensure the council values and behaviours are demonstrated and lead by example*

b) Managing the work programme

- *Lead the development of a balanced annual work programme* for the PDS panel and ensure its delivery
- *Ensure that the work programme is manageable* and the workload delegated and prioritised to focus on the areas of most benefit or greatest risk to the organisation and public, and framed within a realistic understanding of the financial context of the Council
- *Work with Officers* to commission research to deliver the panel's work programme
- *Liaise with officers* on the content of the agenda
- *Work closely with PDS staff* to drive continual improvements in the PDS process
- *Report on progress against the work programme* to Council and others as appropriate

c) Effective meeting management

- *Plan and set agendas* containing clear objectives and outcomes for the meetings
- *Manage the progress of business at meetings*, ensuring that meeting objectives are met, the Code of Conduct, standing orders and other constitutional requirements are adhered to, and that all participants have an opportunity to make appropriate contributions

3. Personal and role development

- As for 'All councillors'

Role Description for Members of Policy and Development Scrutiny Panels

This role description identifies the responsibilities specific to the role of Policy and Development Scrutiny Panel member and should be read in conjunction with the role description for all councillors.

1. Accountabilities

- To full Council
- To the public
- To the Chair of the Policy and Development Scrutiny (PDS) panel

2. Roles and Activities

a) Understanding the nature of the PDS panel

- *Be familiar with* the purpose of the PDS panel, and relevant policies and plans

b) Participating in meetings and making decisions

- *Attend* the PDS panel meetings
- *Contribute effectively to the scrutiny process* by ensuring the questioning of the relevant Cabinet Member/Officer on the development and performance of policy and strategy
- *Demonstrate an objective and evidence-based approach to scrutiny*, ensuring that scrutiny enquiries are methodologically sound, and consider a wide range of evidence and perspectives
- *Contribute to joint scrutiny activities* with other authorities or organisations when required

c) Internal governance, ethical standards and relationships

- *Ensure the integrity of the PDS panel's decision making* and of his/ her own role by adhering to the Code of Conduct and other constitutional and legal requirements
- *Promote and support good governance* by the Council
- *Understand the respective roles* of members, officers and external parties operating within the PDS panel's area of responsibility

3. Personal and role development

- As for 'All councillors' plus:
- *Complete all necessary mandatory training* specific to the PDS panel's role
- *Be prepared to give a commitment to a potentially significant workload* (in addition to ward work) and have a willingness to be available to attend panel meetings

Role Description for the Chair of a Regulatory Committee

This role description identifies the responsibilities specific to the role of a Chair of a Regulatory Committee and should be read in conjunction with the role description of all councillors.

1. Accountabilities

- To full Council
- To the members of the regulatory committee

2. Roles and Activities

a) Leadership and direction

- *Provide confident and effective chairing of regulatory committee meetings* to ensure effective contributions from each member and clear decision making
- *Ensure* that applicants and other interested parties are satisfied as to the *transparency of the regulatory process*
- *Demonstrate integrity and impartiality in decision making* which accord with legal, constitutional and policy requirements
- *Delegate actions* to sub committees as appropriate
- *Have up to date knowledge* of law, regulations, policy and plans relevant to the regulatory committee

b) Promoting the role of the regulatory committee and quasi-judicial decision making

- *Act as an ambassador for the regulatory committee*, facilitating understanding of the role
- *Act within technical, legal and procedural requirements* to oversee the functions of the committee fairly and correctly
- *Ensure thoroughness and objectivity in the committee*, receiving and responding to professional advice in the conduct of meetings and in individual cases/applications before formal committee meetings

c) Internal governance, ethical standards and relationships

- *Develop the standing and integrity of the committee* and its decision making
- *Understand the respective roles* of members, officers and external parties operating within the regulatory committee's area of responsibility
- *Promote and support good governance* by the Council

3. Personal and role development

- As for 'All councillors' plus:
- *Complete all necessary mandatory training* specific to the Committee's role
- *Be prepared to give a commitment to a potentially significant workload* (in addition to ward work) and have a willingness to be available to chair committee meetings that may need to be arranged at short notice in order to meet statutory prescribed deadlines (particularly in the case of licensing work)

Role Description for Members of Regulatory Committees

This role description identifies the responsibilities specific to the role of Regulatory Committee member and should be read in conjunction with the role description of all councillors.

1. Accountabilities

- To full Council
- To the Chair of the regulatory committee

2. Roles and Activities

a) Understanding the nature of the regulatory committee and quasi-judicial decision making

- *Be aware of the quasi-judicial nature* of regulatory committee decision making
- *Have up to date knowledge* of law, regulations, policy and plans relevant to the regulatory committee
- *Be thorough and objective in receiving and responding to professional advice* in the conduct of meetings and individual cases/applications before the committee

b) Participating in meetings and making decisions

- *Attend* the regulatory committee meetings
- *Participate effectively in meetings of the regulatory committee*, ensuring that both local considerations and policy recommendations are balanced to contribute to effective decision making
- *Make informed and balanced decisions*, within the terms of reference of the committee, which accord with legal, constitutional and policy requirements

c) Internal governance, ethical standards and relationships

- *Ensure the integrity of the committee's decision making* and of his/ her own role by adhering to the Code of Conduct(s) and other constitutional and legal requirements
- *Promote and support good governance* by the Council
- *Understand the respective roles* of members, officers and external parties operating within the regulatory committee's area of responsibility
- For the Development Management Committee, *work within the Planning Code of Conduct*
<https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD1664&ID=1664&RPID=55860028>

3. Personal and role development

- As for 'All councillors' plus:
- *Complete all necessary mandatory training* specific to the Committee's role
- *Be prepared to give a commitment to a potentially significant workload* (in addition to ward work) and have a willingness to be available to attend committee meetings that may need to be arranged at short notice in order to meet statutory prescribed deadlines (particularly in the case of licensing work)