

# Chairman of the Council

## Scheme of Reference

### 1. Introduction

The Chairman of the Council is regarded as the 'First Citizen of the District' and the 'Ceremonial Head of the Council', although the Chairman has few legal powers. As a serving district councillor, the Chairman should remain politically impartial.

This Scheme of Reference is intended as background guidance for the Chairman of the Council on the nature of his/her duties together with the financial and support arrangements provided.

The Chief Executive, Head of Law and Governance/Monitoring Officer and the Democratic and Elections Manager will be available to discuss or advise the Chairman on any issues relating to their role as Chairman.

### 2. Role of the Chairman<sup>1</sup>

The Chairman (and Vice-Chairman) of the Council will be elected by full Council annually.

The Chairman (and in his/her absence, the Vice-Chairman) will have the following responsibilities:

- to uphold and promote the purposes of the Constitution, and to interpret the Constitution within meetings of Council when necessary;
- to preside over meetings of Council so that its business can be carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of Councillors and the interests of the community;
- to ensure that the Council meeting is a forum for the debate of matters of concern to the local community and the place at which Members who are not in the Executive or do not hold Committee chairs are able to hold the Executive and Committee Chairmen to account;
- to promote public involvement in the Council's activities;
- to be the conscience of the Council; and
- to attend such civic and ceremonial functions as the Council and he/she determines appropriate.

Neither the Chairman nor Vice-Chairman of the Council can be a member of the Executive.

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<sup>1</sup> As set out in the Constitution of Cherwell District Council

### **3. Protocol**

Under the Local Government Act 1972 the Chairman of the Council is First Citizen of the District and at events within the District takes precedence over everyone except the Queen's representative. If the Vice-Chairman is attending an engagement in place of the Chairman, s/he takes the same precedence.

The Chairman of Cherwell District Council always takes precedence over the Mayors of the Town Councils.

The Chairman's badge on the Chain of Office is worn by the Chairman of Cherwell District Council during his/her Civic Year when representing the District Council at civic and community events.

### **4. Invitations to the Chairman**

Local organisations may invite the Chairman to attend any event they are organising. Invitations should be sent to the Chairman's Personal Assistant who will contact the event organiser to confirm arrangements.

A list of engagements attended by the Chairman will be submitted to each Council meeting for information.

### **5. Administrative Support**

The Chairman will have a Personal Assistant<sup>2</sup> who will provide a level of professional support for the civic and ceremonial activities associated with the role of Chairman of the Council.

The Personal Assistant to the Chairman sits within the Law and Governance service area and reports to the Democratic and Elections Manager.

In the absence of the Personal Assistant to the Chairman, the Democratic and Elections Team will provide support.

### **6. Chairman's Budget and Chairman's Allowance**

#### **Chairman's Allowance**

Under the Local Government Act 1972, a principal council may pay the Chairman an allowance which it thinks reasonable for the purpose of meeting the expenses of those offices. This is often known as 'civic dignitaries' allowance'.

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<sup>2</sup> The Personal Assistant will provide 0.3FTE support for the Chairman

Cherwell District Council believes that no serving councillor should be excluded from accepting the role of Chairman due to concerns about the potential personal financial cost to meet the expenses of office. Therefore, in addition to the basic allowance paid to all councillors, the Chairman shall receive an additional allowance.

The allowance paid to the Chairman of Cherwell District Council is £2000 per year of office.

The purpose of the allowance is to cover the expenses of office, e.g. clothing; subsistence; sundry donations including collections and raffle tickets; drinks at official events.

The Chairman's allowance will be paid annually as a lump sum upon appointment as Chairman.

### **Chairman's Budget**

The purpose of the Chairman's budget is to support his/her activities as Chairman (within the available budget as set annually) including:

- Mileage for attendance at official events to which the Chairman has been invited in his/her official capacity as Chairman of the Council<sup>3</sup>
  - Claims are to be submitted on the Chairman's claim form within two months of the expense being incurred and paid at the standard rate for Members mileage.
- Tickets for the Chairman and consort to attend events within the United Kingdom to which the Chairman has been invited in his/her official capacity as Chairman of Cherwell District Council
  - The Chairman's Personal Assistant is authorised to purchase tickets to events to the value of £50 per ticket. The purchase of tickets for events costing more than £50 must be authorised by the Head of Law and Governance.
- Travel (e.g. train/taxi) within the United Kingdom for attendance of the Chairman and Consort in his/her official capacity as Chairman of Cherwell District Council.
  - The Chairman's PA will be responsible for making travel arrangements.
  - If the Chairman arranges his/her own travel, this will come out of the Chairman's allowance. However, in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Head of Law and Governance, the Chairman may submit and receive payment for a travel claim.
  - Any requests not included in this Scheme of Reference for the official representation of the Chairman of Cherwell District Council (and his/her consort), including attendance at any events outside the United Kingdom should be submitted to the Executive for consideration and approval
- Arranging events for the Chairman

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<sup>3</sup> Any queries as to what constitutes an official event are to be determined by the Head of Law and Governance

- The Chairman's Personal Assistant will be responsible for arranging events in consultation with the Chairman and the Head of Law and Governance.
- Associated expenditure for Annual Council
- Training
- Gifts at the end of the Chairman's term of office
- Refreshments for events hosted by the Chairman
- Maintenance of the Chairman's Chain

### **Budget Monitoring**

Budget Monitoring of the Chairman's budget will be undertaken as part of the regular Law and Governance budget monitoring and the Chairman will be advised as necessary.

### **Departure of Chairman**

Should the Chairman of the Council cease to hold office during their term of appointment, the Head of Law and Governance will be responsible for determining the appropriate consequential arrangements in light of the circumstances.