

The Chairman

The Chairman (Chair):

- • Holds a statutory post defined in law.
- • Is a member of the Council and is elected annually.
- • Has the authority at meetings and must be obeyed when issuing lawful direction or direction in line with Standing Orders.
- • Is the interface between the public and Council.
- • is the one to welcome speakers and make them 'feel at home'.
- • Is to make sure the decision is clear for the clerk to act upon.

The Chairman is responsible for:

- Ensuring that effective and lawful decisions are taken at meetings of the Council and, assisted by the Clerk, guides activities by managing the meetings of the Council.
- Involving all Councillors in discussion and ensuring that Councillors keep to the point. The Chair summarises the debate and facilitates the making of clear resolutions and is responsible for keeping discussions moving so that the meeting is not too long.
- When voting, the Chair's first vote is a personal vote as a member of the Council. If there is a tied vote, the Chair can have a second, casting vote.

The Chair cannot decide which items should appear on the agenda for meetings. However, they should plan the meeting with the Clerk. The Clerk is responsible for the agenda, apart from Extraordinary Meetings. Normal practice would be for the Clerk to consult with the Chair when drawing up the agenda to ensure that appropriate and necessary items are added.

They should brief themselves and prepare fully and study all relevant information and anticipate the needs and interests of the members. The Chair can then answer questions or deal with requests for information.

The Chairman should be punctual – the Chair should set a good example by arriving early to check the arrangements and welcome members, the public and any visiting speakers.

Conducting the Council Meeting

The Chairman should:

- Check there is a quorum (minimum number of members needed to make the meeting legal) To have a quorum, it must be 1/3 of the committee membership, but must be a minimum of 3.
- Call the meeting to order, declare it open and end it by clearly stating it closed and the time it ended.
- Introduce the standard items on the agenda – apologies; declarations of interest; confirmation of minutes of previous meeting.
- Introduce the agenda items and ensure that all members know what they have to achieve and how they might do it.
- Create an atmosphere which encourages participation
- Stimulate an exchange of ideas and experience.
- Ensure that all have a chance to express their views freely.

- Keep the members aware of objectives. Understand the principles of debate and voting (see Standing Orders and the “NALC Good Councillors Guide 2017” from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC))
- Maintain focus – ensure the Council and Committees act within its terms of reference and/or legal powers and functions.
- Keep the discussion to the point, and that it is relevant and ensure the Council deals with clear issues.
- Manage conflict. Rule on disputed matters. Be fair and balanced. Remain impartial and not ‘guide’ Councillors to their desired decision.
- Preserve order. Be in control of the meeting.
- Enforce rules of procedure. Ensure compliance with standing orders, financial regulations, Council policies, etc.
- Know that they have no more statutory power than any other Councillor except that of the casting vote.
- To ensure that where and when appropriate and allowable, the Council takes a vote to exclude the public and press from Council meetings.
- Ideally not allow the meeting to continue for more than 2 hours without a break (depending on Standing Orders).
- Know that they cannot be a committee of one (Hillingdon Case Law)
- Respect and understand the role of the Clerk/RFO and other officers, and ensure that employment issues (e.g. performance, disciplinary matters) are only raised in Council meetings when appropriate and in line with Council policy and employment law.
- Co-operate with officers and Councillors.

The Chair on their own has no power to make decisions without the Resolution of the Council.

The Chair should not involve themselves in the day to day administration of the Council, but can be a point of reference for officers, if agreed by Council.

The Chair will often be the public face of the Council and will represent the Council at official events. They may be asked to speak on behalf of the Council and in such circumstances should only express the agreed views of the Council and not their personal views. The Chair cannot legally make a decision on behalf of the Council.