

Guidance on Appointments to External Organisations

This guidance draws attention to the main issues which you, as a Councillor, should consider when appointed to serve on an external organisation. In the context of this guidance an external organisation is a non-statutory organisation which may be a charity, an incorporated company (either limited by shares or guarantee), a friendly society or an unincorporated association.

Service on external organisations has always been an established part of a Councillor's role. An appointed member on an external organisation will be able to use their knowledge and skills as a Council Member to assist the organisation to which they are appointed.

Councils are increasingly working in partnership with external organisations and greater clarity is needed about the role of Councillors appointed to these organisations. Questions of accountability and governance are likely to arise as funding streams that are of benefit to external organisations may be channelled through the Council as the accountable body.

Being a member of an external organisation is not the same as being a Member of the Council. You will have different duties, obligations and personal liabilities, depending on the type of organisation involved.

Matters to consider before Appointment

Before taking up active membership it would be prudent to establish the capacity in which you are appointed. This may be either:

- As a member of the management committee, board of directors or committee of trustees of the external organisation. Here, you will not only be representing the interests of the Council but you will also have duties for the external organisation, such as a role in its governance.
- As a member of an external organisation where you represent the Council's position but take no part in its management or governance, other than attend and vote at annual or general meetings. Here, you will be mainly concerned with representing the Council.

Conflicts of Interest and Bias

Councillors appointed to an external organisation will have a personal interest in that organisation and will need to consider their position when they sit on any Council committee which is considering a matter relating to the external organisation.

A personal interest will always need to be declared and the Councillor will need to consider whether or not they also have a prejudicial interest arising from that membership.

Prejudicial interest rules apply, regardless of whether or not you have been appointed onto the external organisation by the Council.

Involvement and Reporting

Councillors appointed to an external organisation should attend meetings regularly and become familiar with issues relating to that organisation.

A Councillor appointed as the Council's representative is required to make reports to the appropriate Standing Committee on the progress being made by that organisation and on any issues which the Council should consider.

Further Advice

Relationships between the Council, external organisations and the Council's representative can be complex. In any case of dispute or difficulty, advice should be sought from the Town Clerk who, if necessary, can take advice.