

AGENDA 1, Enc i) Council Roles

Legally Required Roles

Chair

Pursuant to section 15 (2) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council must elect a Chair at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May. The Chair 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 Full Council.

The Council is not lawfully constituted without a Chair, and this must be the first item on the agenda at the Annual Meeting of the Council. All councillors have one vote, with the Chair having a casting vote in the event of a tie.

Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

The Clerk is the proper officer of the Council and is responsible for advising the Council on governance, ethical, and procedural matters. The Clerk also acts as the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), managing the Council's finances and ensuring proper financial records are kept. The appointment of a Clerk/RFO is a legal requirement for all Town and Parish Councils.

Other Roles

Civic Head and a Deputy Civic Head

Ashington Town Council does not adopt the Town Mayor model, legally entitled to the Chair of a Town Council by Section 245 (6) of the Local Government Act 1972. Instead, the Council appoints a Civic Head and a Deputy Civic Head at the Annual Meeting. The Civic Head is expected to attend civic and ceremonial functions that require a civic presence but has no decision-making authority.

Leader and a Deputy Leader

The Council also appoints a Leader and a Deputy Leader at the Annual Meeting. These roles are not statutory, and the Leader has no executive decision-making power to act on the Council's behalf. However, the Leader is delegated the authority to work directly with the Town Clerk, Chair of the Council, and Committee Chairs to develop and propose the strategic direction and policy objectives of the Council. All agreements and negotiations are subject to authorisation by the appropriate committee or Council, as per the legal principle that delegation of authority can only be made to officers and committees, not individual councillors.

Vice-Chair

The appointment of a Vice-Chair is not a legal requirement, but Ashington Town Council chooses to appoint one at the Annual Meeting. The Vice-Chair's role is to take up the position of Chair in the absence of the Chair. However, if the Chair is absent from a meeting and no Vice-Chair has been appointed, the Council can appoint one of the councillors present at that meeting to chair the proceedings. This temporary appointment would only be valid for that specific meeting.

It is important to note that all councillors have equal voting rights at Council meetings, with the exception of the Chair's casting vote in the event of a tie.

Roles have been included in Standing Orders