



East Northamptonshire Council

Policy and Resources Committee - 13 July 2009

Aiming For Excellence (A4E): Councillor Knowledge Skills and Behaviours

Summary

This report seeks approval for a framework for Knowledge Skills and Behaviours for Councillors, to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan

Attachment(s)

Councillors Draft Knowledge, Skills and Behaviour Framework (as developed by Member Working Party)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In July 2008 the Council agreed its Corporate Plan 2008-11 in which a key outcome to achieving status as an *Excellent Council in the eyes of the community* was to have "Officers and Members with the right Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours". The Council pledged to continue to invest in training and development for staff and councillors, to ensure that they have the right skills and knowledge to carry out their roles into the future.
- 1.2 In order to help focus scarce resources of Member time and training budgets, it was agreed to develop a Councillors Knowledge, Skills and Behaviour framework to complement that agreed and implemented for staff. The development of the framework has been led by Cllr P Hardcastle as Champion for the A4E programme supported by Cllrs G Greenwood Smith, S Hughes, R Glithero and E Lucille.
- 1.3 Work started in September 2008 with a review of best practice across the country. The final framework is a result of workshops and numerous conversations with individual Members to shape that best practice to suit the requirements of this Council. Its completion at this time is a particularly timely opportunity to generate publicity to inform local residents of the high standards set by local councillors.

2.0 Framework Contents

- 2.1 The working group has developed a draft framework which embodies the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) Members feel are important in order for them to play an effective role in leading the Council and representing their communities.
- 2.2 The framework is split into two parts:
 - Part A sets out the core knowledge, skills and behaviours which all Members should be expected to possess
 - Part B sets out the specific knowledge, skills and behaviours which Members with special responsibilities require to undertake those additional duties e.g. as Chairs of Committees or as Lead Members
- 2.3 It is proposed that the framework is reviewed periodically so that it evolves and develops over time to meet the changing challenges of local government.

3. Support and training

3.1 It is recognised that new Members may need support and opportunities to develop some of the skills and acquire detailed knowledge of the Council and its processes. Existing Members may also seek support as they undertake new roles. Such support and development opportunities may be provided by a range of activities:

- Mentoring by more experienced colleagues
- Formal training offered by political groups and other organisations such as LGA and IDeA
- East Northamptonshire Induction Training for Members

3.2 It is proposed to review the range, quality and accessibility of training and other development opportunities offered to Members in order to support their chosen areas of development.

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 Members are asked to approve the Councillors Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours Framework

Implications:	
Corporate Outcomes or Other Policy/Priority/Strategy	
Good Quality of Life	<input type="checkbox"/> Good Reputation <input type="checkbox"/>
Good Value for Money	<input type="checkbox"/> High Quality Service Delivery <input type="checkbox"/>
Effective Partnership Working	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong Community Leadership <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Effective Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of our Customers and Communities <input type="checkbox"/>
Employees and Members with the Right Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other:	
Decision(s) would be outside the budget or policy framework and require full Council approval <input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial	There are no financial implications at this stage <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	There will be financial implications – see paragraph <input type="checkbox"/>
	There is provision within existing budget <input type="checkbox"/>
	Decisions may give rise to additional expenditure at a later date <input type="checkbox"/>
	Decisions may have potential for income generation <input type="checkbox"/>
Risk Management	An assessment has been carried out and there are no material risks <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Material risks exist and these are recorded at Risk Register Reference - inherent risk score - residual risk score - <input type="checkbox"/>
Staff	There are no additional staffing implications <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Additional staff will be required – see paragraph <input type="checkbox"/>
Equalities and Human Rights	There will be no impact on equality (race, age, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation) or human rights implications <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	There will be an impact on equality (see categories above) or human rights implications – see paragraph <input type="checkbox"/>
Legal	Power: Local Government Act 1972 – Section 111
	Other considerations:
Background Papers: None	
Person Originating Report: Sharn Matthews, Executive Director and Monitoring Officer, 01832 742108	
Date: 6 July 2009	
CFO	MO
CX	

DRAFT – Introduction for KSB framework document

Councillors' Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours

Working Together to Achieve Excellence

Our Councillors' Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours framework has been developed by Councillors for Councillors, to make clear the knowledge, skills and behaviours we think it's important for our Councillors to have. It describes the core knowledge, skills and behaviours we value and which all Councillors need to possess and use to excel in their role.

The role of a Councillor is a rewarding form of public service that enables people to make a positive difference to the quality of life and well-being of their local area. Councillors have to be able to balance the needs and interests of residents, voters, political parties and the Council itself, whilst acting fairly and within the law. It is important that Councillors understand their very diverse role so that they can perform it effectively and responsibly.

The framework provides clarity for you about what is expected of you and supports you in your own development by providing a checklist against which you can assess your knowledge and skills and identify your personal development needs. It helps us to develop an effective Member Development Programme, which Councillors can use when they first join the Council and dip into later - according to their personal needs and the particular roles they are asked to perform.

Councillors are the bridge between a community and its Council. Your job is to be the community's advocate and to build relationships with individuals and groups to inform, consult and work with local people and community groups, involving them in the decisions about the things that matter to them.

As an East Northamptonshire Councillor you will:

- develop a collective vision for the whole district
- develop policy about the services to be provided to meet the needs of the community.
- be an advocate of those policies within your community and effectively represent the interests of your Ward and its constituents in the Council's decision making process.
- create a balanced budget, including setting the level of Council Tax for the District, in order to support delivery of those policies
- support and promote citizenship locally and encourage the community to participate in the governance of the area.
- carry out a scrutiny role to ensure effective and efficient service delivery
- undertake casework and act as an advocate for constituents in resolving their concerns

- work with Parish and Town Councils and other local organisations to identify and pursue local needs and aspirations and encourage community action.
- represent the Council on outside bodies and participate effectively in the appointed role.

Some Councillors require specific knowledge skills and behaviours in addition to the core elements, because they carry out a particular role for the Council. The additional knowledge, skills and behaviours they need are also set out in this framework.

Councillors work closely with Council Officers to achieve the outcomes the Council wants for the area. They have different, but complementary, roles and responsibilities. This Councillors' knowledge, skills and behaviours framework complements the knowledge, skills and behaviours framework we have for Officers; together they provide the foundation for achieving our vision to become **“an excellent Council in the eyes of the community”**.

PART A – ALL COUNCILLORS

CORE KNOWLEDGE

These are the areas of core knowledge the Council believes all Councillors should look to have and develop

East Northamptonshire Council

- Understands our vision, Corporate Plan and strategic ambition
- Understands our organisation structure and knows who SMT and Heads of Service are
- Understands our relationship with partners, outside bodies and key stakeholders
- Is familiar with the committee structure and procedures and the responsibilities of being a Councillor
- Knows which Officer to contact for what
- Understands their Code of Conduct and, in particular, the potential conflicts of interests in serving as a twin, or triple, hatted Councillor (Parish and County)
- Knows the “process” for responding to constituents’ enquiries
- Understands the profile of their ward and relationships with Parish/Town Councils in it
- Knows how to manage their caseloads and respond to constituents’ enquiries
- Understands which Service Area does what
- Understands our customer service standards
- Has a basic understanding of the risks involved in decision making
- Is aware of the opportunity to raise issues for scrutiny

Local Government

- Understands what the different tiers of local government do, and the relationships between the tiers
- Understands the development control process to enable them to respond to constituents’ enquiries
- Understands how national and regional policies are interpreted locally and the role of partnerships

Financial Awareness

- Has a basic financial awareness of how we are funded, and how much we spend on services
- Understands the distinction between revenue and capital budgets
- Understands the systems of internal control

Legislation

- Appreciates that local government is a creature of statute and understands the concept of reasonableness in decision making
- Has a basic understanding of the principles of data protection
- Has a basic understanding of the Freedom of Information Act
- Has a basic understanding of equal opportunities legislation
- Has a basic understanding of health and safety legislation
- Understands the principles of regulatory and quasi-judicial decision making
- Understands how policy decisions can be “called in” by Scrutiny Committee members

Political Awareness

- Understands the national and local political dimensions and the relationship with the party manifesto
- Keeps up to date with local ward issues
- Understands the roles of the Council’s statutory officers
- Understands the roles of Officers and Councillors
- Understands political decision-making structures
- Understands the political and managerial structure of the Council

Systems and IT

- Knows the different sources of information and how to access them
- Understands what IT facilities are available, especially EUNICE

CORE SKILLS

These are core skills the Council believes all Councillors should demonstrate or develop

Working Together

- Establishes and builds effective relationships with Officers
- Values others
- Inspires and motivates others
- Operates effectively in committees

Customer focused

- Understands different customers' needs
- Deals effectively with different types of customers
- Deals with casework (constituents' enquiries) in a timely and effective manner

Communicating effectively

- Presents information clearly
- Listens and questions actively
- Uses IT systems
- Communicates decisions; explains clearly how they were made, and helps others to appreciate our vision
- Develops good working relationships across the Council and with external partners and outside bodies
- Speaks confidently in public
- Networks effectively with their Ward

Taking Responsibility

- Plans own workload and manages time effectively
- Makes decisions based on what is best for the community as a whole
- Works within the Council's Constitution
- Is self-aware
- Takes responsibility for their behaviour and how it impacts on the reputation of the Council

Committed to Continuous Improvement

- Keeps own knowledge and skills base up to date
- Identifies areas requiring improvement
- Shows good problem solving skills

Political Awareness

- Interprets political priorities and translates them into appropriate strategies and policies
- Manages relationships with Officers, Partners, Parish/Town Councils

and other key Stakeholders

Systems and IT

- Has good computer skills, developed over time, including email and use of the internet

COUNCILLOR CORE BEHAVIOURS

These are the core behaviours the Council believes all Councillors should have or develop

Working together

- Constructively contributes to achieving our priorities
- Listens to the views of others
- Achieves joint outcomes with Officers, Partners, Parish/Town Councils and Outside Bodies
- Inspires trust
- Adopts positive attitudes to problem solving

Customer focused

- Shows discretion and integrity
- Is respectful and diplomatic
- Seeks to ensure that everyone receives a level of service appropriate to their needs
- Makes time for constituents – shows care and understanding
- Listens to and values the opinions and needs of constituents

Communicating effectively

- Matches their communication to the needs of constituents
- Listens to others to ensure understanding
- Uses Plain English
- Presents a positive image of the Council
- Canvasses public opinion on matters of local concern

Taking responsibility

- Takes ownership, is confident
- Follows through to ensure issues are concluded
- Maintains high standards of conduct and ethics

Committed to continuous improvement

- Reviews own performance as a Councillor and takes steps to improve
- Adopts a positive mindset
- Is committed to personal development

Drive for results

- Is committed to the Council's drive for excellence

Seeing the bigger picture

- Contributes to the Council's vision
- Takes the wider view and recognises the impact of Council decisions on partners

PART B – SPECIFIC COMMITTEE MEMBERS OR THOSE WITH SPECIAL ROLES or RESPONSIBILITIES

These are the additional areas of core knowledge, and the additional core skills and behaviours the Council believes members of the Council's Committees or Sub-Committees, or those with special roles or responsibilities should have or develop:-

(i) Serving on Committees

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CORE KNOWLEDGE

Financial Awareness

- Understands our financial and procurement processes

CORE SKILLS

Seeing the bigger picture

- Contributes to the long term direction of the Council
- Develops appropriate, linked, policies and strategies

PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

CORE KNOWLEDGE

Seeing the bigger picture

- Understands national and regional planning policies

CORE SKILLS

Seeing the bigger picture

- Develops appropriate, linked, policies and strategies

FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

CORE SKILLS

Financial asset and risk management

- Reviews financial performance and takes appropriate action

PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE

CORE KNOWLEDGE

East Northamptonshire Council

- Is aware of our employment policies and procedures and knows how staff are affected by them
- Understands and supports work-life balance initiatives

CORE SKILLS

East Northamptonshire Council

- Evaluates the qualities and abilities of candidates to recommend Chief Officer appointments

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CORE KNOWLEDGE

East Northamptonshire Council

- Has a basic understanding of the Service Plans for the 8 Service Areas
- Understands the principles of performance management
- Understands how the Council uses Performance Indicators
- Knows how the “call-in” arrangements work

CORE SKILLS

Communicating effectively

- Asks open questions
- Demonstrates analytical skills and objectivity
- Investigates and provides timely and appropriate challenge
- Checks to ensure understanding
- Shows rigour and objectivity when challenging people or processes

Committed to continuous improvement

- Champions change to secure improvement
- Develops positive outcomes for services from investigations and reviews

CORE BEHAVIOURS

Taking responsibility

- Takes responsibility for their role in our performance management framework

AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

CORE KNOWLEDGE

Financial asset and risk management

- Understands the concept and process of external audit
- Understands the Committee's role
- Understands the way the Statement of Accounts is structured

CORE SKILLS

Financial asset and risk management

- Recognises potential strategic risks and ensures mitigating measures are in place

ASSET MANAGEMENT PANEL

CORE SKILLS

Financial asset and risk management

- Ensures Council assets are fit for purpose

STANDARDS BOARD

CORE KNOWLEDGE

Legislation

- Knows the Code of Conduct for the Council and the Town and Parish Councils
- Understands the ethical framework and the process for handling complaints (also applies to Assessment and Review Sub-Committees)
- Understands the principles of good governance

CORE BEHAVIOURS

Taking responsibility

- Challenges inappropriate behaviour
- Demonstrates high standards and promotes integrity and the 10 principles of public life
- Works effectively with the Monitoring Officer
- Works collaboratively with Independent and Parish/Town Council Board Members

(ii) Performing Special Roles

CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

The role and functions of the Chairman are set out in Article 5 of the Constitution

CORE KNOWLEDGE

East Northamptonshire Council

- Is aware of the issues and challenges facing the Council
- Keeps abreast of the decisions made
- Understands meetings procedures and the role of a Chairman
- Understands the ceremonial role of the Chairman

CORE SKILLS

Communicating Effectively

- Fosters civic pride and champions the Council's achievements
- Promotes public involvement in the Council's activities
- Demonstrates effective media skills
- Is diplomatic and demonstrates integrity
- Keeps meetings on track and to time
- Allows others to have their say
- Sums up effectively

CORE BEHAVIOURS

Communicating Effectively

- Inspires trust in the Chair

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The role of the elected Leader of the Council is set out in Article 6 of the Constitution

CORE KNOWLEDGE

East Northamptonshire Council

- Is aware of the issues and challenges facing the Council
- Keeps abreast of the decisions made

CORE SKILLS

Working Together

- Commands respect from Officers and Members
- Provides strategic leadership for the Council

East Northamptonshire Council

- Demonstrates a positive attitude to change
- Encourages new ideas and innovative thinking
- Presents reports effectively
- Demonstrates effective media skills

Communicating Effectively

- Exerts influence at local, regional and national level
- Negotiates effectively and manages conflicting interests
- Confident public speaker

CORE BEHAVIOURS

Committed to continuous improvement

- Promotes new initiatives

Managing the Group (also applies to Leaders of other Political Groups)

- Encourages and supports Group members
- Motivates and values all Group members

CHAIRMEN of COMMITTEES and SUB-COMMITTEES

CORE KNOWLEDGE

East Northamptonshire Council

- Understands meetings procedures and the role of a Chairman

CORE SKILLS

Communicating Effectively

- Demonstrates effective media skills
- Keeps meetings on track and to time
- Allows others to have their say
- Sums up effectively
- Maintains order and defuses arguments (at public meetings)
- Demonstrates effective media skills
- Presents reports effectively

CORE BEHAVIOURS

Communicating Effectively

- Inspires trust in the Chair

LICENSING PANEL, TAXI PANEL, DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE, HEARINGS SUB-COMMITTEE OF STANDARDS BOARD

CORE KNOWLEDGE

Legislation

- Is familiar with the relevant legislative framework and appropriate Council and Committee Protocols

CORE SKILLS

East Northamptonshire Council

- Observes the rules of natural justice
- Considers the arguments of both sides before making a decision

LEAD MEMBERS

CORE KNOWLEDGE

East Northamptonshire Council

- Understanding of the work of the appropriate Service area
- Knows about relevant current and emerging issues locally, regionally and nationally”

CORE SKILLS

East Northamptonshire Council

- Presents reports effectively
- Demonstrates effective media skills

CHAMPIONS

The role and function of Council Champions is set out in Article 2.07 of the Constitution

CORE KNOWLEDGE

East Northamptonshire Council

- Understanding of the work of the appropriate Service area
- Knows the relevant local organisations which apply to their area of interest
- Knows about relevant current and emerging issues locally, regionally and nationally.

CORE SKILLS

East Northamptonshire Council

- Presents reports effectively
- Demonstrates effective media skills

Communicating Effectively

- Establishes meaningful relationships with local organisations, consults them and presents their views

Legislation

- Has a knowledge of health & safety legislation (Safety Champion)

REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

CORE KNOWLEDGE

Working Together

- Understands the work and remit of the body and how it links with the Council's priorities
- Understands the nature of their role and responsibilities in relation to the body (ie a representative or a trustee or director) (*see Monitoring Officer guidance on EUNICE – Councillor's Information*)