

Democratic Services

Service Statement 2018 - 2021

Service Director: Kelly Angus

Head of Service: Jackie Roll

Lead Member: Councillor Nick Oliver

March 2018

Democratic Services

Service purpose and functions

Purpose:

Democratic Services is the administrative interface between Northumberland County Council Members, staff and stakeholders. The Service's main objective is the successful delivery of democratic services whilst at the same time enhancing value and securing efficiencies.

Primary functions:

Committee and Scrutiny Services

- Planning and managing the Council's diary of meetings;
- Co-ordinating and managing the decision making process;
- Issuing agenda and associated reports for Council, committees; sub-committees and working groups;
- Taking minutes of those meetings and allocating action taken on the decisions taken;
- Providing support to committee chairs and procedural advice to elected members and officers;
- Delivering effective Overview and Scrutiny internally and externally, at both strategic and operational level to inform policy development, policy review and service improvement by the Council;
- Developing and maintaining a work programme for the scrutiny function and a comprehensive Committee referral system;
- Project managing themed scrutiny reviews and providing support to members to engage effectively in the delivery of the review programme;
- Securing effective arrangements for community engagement and involvement in the overview and scrutiny function and Local Area Councils;
- Participating in a programme of joint scrutiny activity at regional and sub-regional level, including those issues relating to health;
- Carrying out relevant research and collating performance management data to support members in their role;
- Monitoring and tracking decisions taken throughout the decision making process;
- Promoting transparency by managing the service's section of the web-site so that the public have timely access to information;
- Organising appeal hearings in relation to licensing applications, schools and employees;
- Managing the Council's appointments to outside bodies at local, regional and national level;

- Maintaining the register of Members' interests;
- Oversight of Member Induction and Training;
- Undertaking Governance Reviews;
- Common Land and Village Green searches;
- Promotion of engagement with the community through the petitioning process and democracy workshops;
- Administering the petitions procedure.

Member Support:

- Providing secretarial and day to day administrative support to the Business Chair and Deputy Business Chair of the Council, Leader, Deputy Leader, Civic Head, Cabinet and all members;
- Assisting with constituency casework for all elected members, undertaking research when necessary;
- Organising Civic Events and other ceremonial occasions and receiving guests;
- Assist with Corporate events;
- Using the Member Services Working Group to identify new needs and improvements to the service;
- Member Services Request System.

Lord Lieutenancy:

- Hosting the Clerkship to the Lord Lieutenancy which provides support to the Lord Lieutenant in their role as the Monarch's representative in the County.

Armed Forces Support:

- Providing support to the Armed Forces Champion in promoting the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant and hosting the Armed Forces Forum in Northumberland and the North East Region.

Service Parameters

Key Service Facts and Figures

- 247 Committees serviced this year to date;
- 40 planning related site visits undertaken over all the LACs and Strategic Planning up until 28 February 2018;
- 22 days sessions of School Admission Appeals 0 half days of Exclusion Appeal hearings from 1 May 2017 to date
- 6 civic events;
- 6 Armed Forces events and 4 Northumberland Forum meetings, 1 NE Forum meeting
- 1 Royal Visit

- 11 petitions

Service parameters

Key service facts and figures

Summary of service resources at 1 April 2018:

Function	Number of FTE posts	Staffing expenditure	Non-staffing expenditure	Income	Capital investment
Totals for Service					

Contribution to the Corporate Plan

Vision for the service in contributing to delivery of the Corporate Plan in the period to 2021, including improved outcome areas.

The service will focus on ensuring our committee system and decision making processes reflect the Corporate Plan by being **'efficient, open and work for everyone'** We will pursue the recording and streaming of council meetings and through public question time at the local area councils and county council meetings, the scrutiny process and our involvement with CVS and Town and Parish Councils committees, involve communities in decisions which affect them.

We will ensure our Councillors receive the support and training necessary to carry out their role both as County Councillors and also within their local communities and promote Northumberland through supporting civic functions and corporate events.

We will encourage participation and interest from our young people through school visits and Local Democracy Week and continue to host placements for job experience.

We will continue to support our military family through promoting the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant and hosting the Armed Forces Forum in Northumberland and the North East Region.

We will ensure that other services and Partners are fully supported through the decision making process and, together with Legal Services, ensure all processes and procedures are lawful and reports reflect the ethos of the Administration and the principles of the Corporate Plan.

External Validation

Benchmarking

Democratic Services is a member of the CIPFA Benchmark Club and our performance for 2016-17 was compared against 13 other local authorities in the Autumn of 2017.

The final report for 2016-17 shows that committee staff costs are slightly above average for the service. Whilst the overall number of committee meetings for the authority has fallen slightly due to changes in the political management structure, the number of meetings serviced remains above the comparator average. Scrutiny costs are well below the national average. Elected member costs are above the national average. This is part due to the geographical area covered by the Council which affects travel and subsistence costs.

Priorities for 2018 - 2021

Priority area	Key milestones
1.Information Governance. To ensure compliance with GDPR	March/April 2018
2. Local Area Councils To review the effectiveness of Local Area Councils and make recommendations to Annual Council	May/June 2018
3. Scrutiny Services To review the effectiveness of scrutiny following the Government Review report and make recommendations to Cabinet	May/June 2018
4.Member / Executive Support To review capacity and work roles in order to provide excellent member/Executive support	April/May 2018
5.Members Personal Development Plans To encourage the completion of PDP's in order to highlight training needs of members.	April/May 2018
6. Review of Procedures Clarification of protocols and procedures for members including travelling and subsistence, Conferences etc	April/May 2018
7. Review Member Service Request System Work with IT and members to review the Member Service Request System to ensure the service is fit for purpose and compatible with other service request systems.	May/June 2018
8.Promote implementation of paperless agenda To reduce printing and postage costs and comply with New Ways of Working.	July/September 2018

Performance framework

Measure	Outturn 2016-17	Outturn 2017-18	Target 2018-19	Target 2019-20	Target 2020-21
Minutes completed within 7 days	100%	99.5%	100%	100%	100%
Reduce printing costs/reduce agenda circulation			20%	30%	40%
ISO reduce exceptions	9 Target was 5	6 (to date) Target was 6	6	6	6
Process requests for education appeals within Dfe timescales (Acknowledgement of request within 5 working days)	98.7%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Specific Targets in the operation of the petitions system:					
1. Acknowledgement of petition within 5 working days.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
2. Copy of report to petitioner at least 5 working days before committee	60%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of Member Personal Development Plans completed	n/a	n/a	55	67	67