



Leicester
City Council

Standards Committee

13th January 2010

Member Conduct at Meetings

Report of the Monitoring Officer

1. Purpose of Report

This report has been prepared to reflect the views of the Independent Chair of the Standards Committee. The report proposes a revision to the 'Member Conduct at Meetings' Protocol as agreed by the Standards Committee on 24th March 2004.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to comment on the revised Protocol and agree its adoption.

3. Report

The 'Member Conduct at Meetings' Protocol was introduced in March 2004 and it applies to all meetings within the Council. It is appended to the Script for Full Council meetings as a reminder to Councillors.

As the Protocol was developed before the adoption of the Standards for England Code of Conduct for Members in 2007 it is now appropriate for it to be reviewed in order to align it to the Code.

The proposed revised Protocol is attached in appendix one. Members are asked to use this as a basis for discussion. The current Protocol is attached for information as appendix two.

4. Legal and Financial Implications

None.

5. Report Author

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Proposed Protocol - Member Conduct at Meetings

Political interaction is one of the most powerful checks and balances which are built into policy development and service delivery. Such interaction should be robust and challenging but must stay within the code of conduct for members. This protocol applies to all meetings held within the Council.

Members should at all times:-

1. Treat others with respect
 - Allow others to speak and explain their position without interruption
 - Avoid unreasonable or excessive personal attack
 - Challenge unacceptable behaviours in others
 - Apologise immediately if they are aware they have caused personal offence
2. Not bully or intimidate others
 - Avoid language that is abusive, malicious, insulting, humiliating, defamatory or offensive
 - Body language can appear intimidating
3. Be aware of the need to respect confidentiality and treat information as such where appropriate
4. Not bring the office of councillor or Leicester City Council into disrepute
5. Avoid attempting to compromise the impartiality of officers
 - Officers are neutral and must not be persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality
6. Address comments to the Chair and avoid direct conversations with other members
7. Take personal responsibility for their behaviour and avoid the need for intervention from the chair
8. Avoid playing to the public gallery, which could result in disruption of the meeting.

MEMBER CONDUCT AT MEETINGS
AS CONSIDERED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE –24 MARCH 2004

Key Principles

Political interaction is frequently the catalyst for public engagement. It is also perhaps the most powerful of the checks and balances which are inbuilt into local authority policy development and service delivery. It is, therefore, not surprising, indeed it should be expected and encouraged, that such interaction should be both robust and challenging. Such an ethos, however, also requires a strong, clear and delineated set of principles in which to operate. To do otherwise would undermine the unique legitimacy of the local democratic process.

Note: To apply to all meetings within the Council irrespective of size (i.e. Council, Cabinet, Committees, Panels or Working Groups involving Elected, Co-opted or Independent Members).

1. Members should have due respect for the local democratic process in which they are engaged and the particular meeting in which they are involved.
2. Self regulation by Members is the best approach and is far preferable to waiting for the Lord Mayor's/Chair's intervention before moderating their behaviour.
3. Lively debate and good humoured banter is to be encouraged and not stifled.
4. Members and officers should, at all times, respect the other's role and responsibilities.
5. All those present should show due respect for the chair of the meeting.
6. Comments of a personal nature against Members, officers or members of the public are seen as generally unacceptable.
7. If offence is taken to a personal remark, an immediate apology and retraction at the time is often all that is needed.
8. Extreme language, including that which is abusive, defamatory or offensive, should be avoided.
9. All speeches should be channelled through the Lord Mayor/Chair, with conversations directly to other Members across the meeting being avoided.
10. The noise levels from conversations within the meeting should be kept to a minimum and certainly not at a level which is disruptive and prevents others hearing the debate.
11. Members should avoid, including the appearance of, taking a lead from Members or others in the public gallery.
12. Councillors should not play to the gallery in such a way that would incite member of the public to behaviour which may lead to them being ejected and shall not direct unacceptable comments to members of the public sitting in the gallery.
13. Members should give the other the courtesy of presenting their comments without continual interruption such that it is disruptive to the good conduct of the meeting.