



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All Wards

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:
Standards Committee

24 March 2004

MEMBER CONDUCT AT MEETINGS

Report of the Town Clerk and Corporate Director of Resources, Access and Diversity

1. Purpose of Report

To identify and codify the key standards of behaviour expected of Members at Meetings.

2. Report

Political engagement, notably in the public arena, is the facet of local government which sets it apart from all other forms of local public service delivery.

Healthy local government and, in particular, the good governance of the city, has, at its core, effective democratic engagement. Fundamental to this principle is the maintenance of public confidence in the quality of democratic debate. This is achieved by force of argument within a framework of the highest standards of conduct and ethics.

The public perception of the manner in which Members conduct themselves in this regard sends out powerful messages about both the attractiveness of participative democracy and of local government as a career.

Having regard to experience over time, and having engaged with the political groups, including, most recently, through the Group Whips, the following set of key principles, to which all Members are expected to adhere, are put forward for consideration. Once agreed, it is recommended that they be incorporated as an Appendix within the Council's Political Conventions – which are currently under review. Being part of the Constitution, these will require Council approval in due course.

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.

Notes: To apply to all meetings within the Council (i.e. Council, Cabinet, Committees or Working Groups involving 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. Members and officers should, at all times, respect the other's role and responsibilities.
4. Comments of a personal nature against either Members or officers is seen as generally unacceptable.
5. If offence is taken to a personal remark, an immediate apology and retraction at the time is often all that is needed.
6. Extreme language should be avoided.
7. All speeches should be channelled through the Lord Mayor/Chair, with conversations directly to other Members across the meeting being avoided.
8. The noise levels from conversations within the meeting to be kept to a minimum and certainly not at a level which is disruptive and prevents others hearing the debate.
9. Members should avoid, including the appearance of, taking a lead from Members or others in the public gallery.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. Lively debate and good humoured banter is to be encouraged and not stifled.

3. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:-

- (i) comment upon the proposed key principles of Member conduct in meetings.

- (ii) agree that the key principles be recommended to Council for incorporation into the Council's Political Conventions by way of a further Appendix to that document.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

1. Financial Implications

None.

2. Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications. If approved, the inclusion of these principles as part of the Council's Political Conventions will require approval by full Council.

3. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	No		
Policy	No		
Sustainable and Environmental	No		
Crime and Disorder	No		
Human Rights Act	No		
Elderly/People on Low Income	No		

4. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

None.

5. Consultations

Political Group Whips.

6. Report Author/Officer to contact:

Charles Poole,
Service Director, Democratic Services
extn. 7015