

# skill framework for elected members

**community leadership (CL)** engages enthusiastically and empathetically with the community in order to learn, understand and act upon issues of local concern. Mediates fairly and constructively, encouraging trust by representing all sections of the community.

## positive indicators

- engages proactively with community, canvasses opinion and seeks new ways of representing others
- keeps up-to-date with community and issues of local concern, drawing information and resources from a range of sources and people
- approachable, is empathetic and understanding and encourages trust
- provides a voice for all sections of the community and develops partnerships inside the council and with external organisations,
- mediates fairly and constructively between people with conflicting needs
- campaigns with enthusiasm, courage and persistence on behalf of others

## negative indicators

- does not engage in community activities, waits to be approached and is difficult to contact (eg says 'I'm not your councillor')
- keeps a low public profile and is not easily recognised by members of the community
- is exclusive in approach, and does not focus equally on community groups or issues
- does not have detailed understanding of local issues and needs
- concentrates on council processes and meetings rather than constituents
- unrealistic about what can be achieved and does not deliver on promises

**regulating and monitoring (RM)** understands and executes judicial role by following protocol, evaluating arguments and making decisions that balance public needs and local policy. Ensures progress by monitoring and intervening where necessary.

## positive indicators

- evaluates arguments according to evidence, makes independent and impartial judgements
- chairs meetings effectively, follows protocol and keeps process on track
- follows legal process, balancing public needs and local policy
- monitors performance and intervenes as appropriate to ensure progress
- seeks feedback on own performance and engages in self-directed learning
- understands and acts on judicial role in order to meet legal responsibilities (eg duty of care, corporate parenting)

## negative indicators

- does not declare personal interest and makes decisions for personal gain
- does not check facts or consider all sides of a story, makes subjective and uninformed judgements
- leaves monitoring and checks on progress to others
- makes decisions without taking advice or considering regulations and wider development frameworks
- fails to recognise or address limits of own knowledge and expertise
- misses deadlines, leaves business unfinished and lacks balance between council work and other commitments

# skill framework for elected members

**scrutiny and challenge (SC)** acts as a critical friend by seeking opportunities for scrutiny and providing constructive feedback. Analyses information quickly and presents arguments in a concise, meaningful and easily accessible way.

## positive indicators

- looks for new methods and topics for critical challenge and scrutiny
- quickly analyses and assimilates complex information, taking account of the wider strategic context
- presents arguments in a concise, meaningful and easily accessible way
- inquisitorial, asks for explanations and checks for implementation of recommendations
- objective, rigorous and resilient in challenging process, decisions and people
- acts as a critical friend, provides constructive feedback and acknowledges the success of others

## negative indicators

- does not prepare thoroughly or check facts, uses selective information and draws subjective or biased conclusions
- overly reliant on officers and tends to back down when challenged
- fails to recognise or engage in scrutiny as part of their role
- assimilates new information slowly, focuses on detail and does not distinguish between important, irrelevant and inaccurate information
- adversarial in style, aggressive and confrontational when challenged
- prefers political 'blood sports' to working collaboratively for the good of the council, abuses scrutiny processes for political gain

**communication skills (CS)** listens sensitively, uses appropriate language and checks for understanding. Communicates regularly with individuals and groups in the community, speaks clearly and confidently in public, and makes sure that people are informed.

## positive indicators

- communicates regularly with community via newsletters, phone calls and local media
- listens sensitively, checks for understanding and adapts style as necessary
- builds relationships with local media and creates opportunities for communicating key decisions, activities and achievements
- speaks clearly and confidently in public, uses accessible language and avoids jargon or 'council-speak'
- provides regular feedback, keeps people informed and manages expectations
- uses appropriate language to communicate key points verbally and in writing (eg letters, reports, interviews and presentations)

## negative indicators

- interrupts, appears not to listen and uses inappropriate or insensitive language (eg shouting, being rude or abusive)
- communicates reactively and is slow to respond when approached by others (eg public, colleagues, officers or media)
- fails to listen to others' views and presents rigid and inflexible arguments,
- uses information dishonestly to discredit others and is unwilling or unable to deliver unpopular messages
- fails to participate in meetings and lacks confidence speaking in public
- presents subjective and confused arguments using poor language and style

# skill framework for elected members

**working in partnership (WP)** builds positive relationships by making others feel valued, trusted and included and by working collaboratively to achieve goals. Maintains calm and focus, recognises when to delegate or provide support and is able to take a long-term view in developing partnerships.

## positive indicators

- builds good relationships with colleagues, officers and wider community
- achieves goals by co-ordinating others, maintaining task focus and persisting in the face of setbacks
- empowers others to take responsibility, knows when to delegate or provide support
- makes others feel valued, trusted and included, recognises and is inclusive of people from different backgrounds
- patient, takes a long-term view in developing networks and partnerships
- maintains calm and focus when criticised or under pressure

## negative indicators

- uses status and position to exert control or impose solutions, fails to involve people in decisions
- exclusive in approach, fails to utilise diverse skills and perspectives of others
- unable to work across political divide and places political gain before collaborative working
- acts alone rather than seeking help or working as part of a team
- uses divisive tactics to upset relationships, council policies and decisions
- defensive when criticised, blames others for failure and does not admit to being wrong

**political understanding (PU)** acts ethically, consistently and with integrity when communicating values or representing group views in decisions and actions. Works across group boundaries without compromising values or ethics.

## positive indicators

- actively represents group views and values through decisions and actions
- helps develop cohesion within the group and contributes to healthy communication between the group and the council
- communicates political values through canvassing, electoral campaigning and by identifying new ways of engaging the public
- committed to developing own political intelligence and understanding of local and national political landscape
- acts ethically, understands and communicates political values to others
- works across group boundaries without compromising political values

## negative indicators

- demonstrates inconsistent political values, lacks integrity and tends to say what others want to hear
- has poor knowledge of group manifesto, values and objectives
- puts personal motivations first, goes native or changes beliefs to match with those in power
- acts alone and fails to support group colleagues in public forums
- fails to translate group values into ways of helping the community
- lacks understanding of how central government policy impacts on local issues and council functioning

# skill framework for cabinet members

**providing vision (PV)** creates a shared council vision by establishing strategic policies and prioritising actions. Actively encourages involvement of others in policy formation and works collaboratively to analyse information and promote understanding. Open to new ideas and ways of doing things

## positive indicators

- establishes strategic policies and prioritises actions based on local needs, manifesto and regional opportunities
- works with officers to collate and analyse information and inform budget priorities and performance plans
- actively encourages involvement of stakeholders in policy formation
- creates and communicates a shared council vision, providing clear direction and promoting understanding
- open to new ideas and adapts innovatively to a changing environment (eg e-government)
- acts to broaden perspective and enhance effectiveness by learning from others and sharing best practice (eg other councils, IDEA)

## negative indicators

- takes short-term 'quick fix' approaches to policy formation, focuses on day-to-day issues rather than future needs and fails to see beyond the next election
- excludes members, officers and public from decision-making and is overly selective in use of information to guide policy decisions
- resistant to change, prefers 'old ways' of doing things and fails to draw on the experience of others (eg councils, peer support)
- does not identify or act on opportunities to promote the council or influence national and regional agendas
- inward looking, does not communicate and explain council vision and policies
- does not work within CPA guidelines or act on recommendations

**managing performance (MP)** works closely with others to develop, promote and achieve objectives and represent council at a strategic level. Encourages scrutiny, monitors performance and responds positively to feedback and ideas.

## positive indicators

- works closely with senior officers to develop, agree and implement portfolio strategies
- sets and communicates realistic and achievable objectives, monitors performance and acts to address deficits
- develops knowledge of council systems and inputs council views at area specific meetings (eg planning, licensing)
- emphasises a team approach and shares responsibility for success and failure
- encourages scrutiny and responds positively to feedback, challenge and ideas
- represents electorate and council at a strategic level through links and partnerships at local, regional and national levels

## negative indicators

- uses support inconsistently or ineffectively, fails to consult or is too reliant on officers or external support
- inflexible and resistant to scrutiny, alternative views and solutions
- creates a 'them and us' attitude to officers, opposition, non-cabinet members or external councils and agencies
- operates in secret and fails to open processes and decision-making to others – 'tells' rather than 'sells'
- overly focused on process and debate, fails to reach conclusions
- fails to integrate own portfolio with wider cabinet agenda

# skill framework for leaders

**excellence in leadership (EL)** provides visionary and charismatic leadership, is well prepared, able to troubleshoot and juggle conflicting responsibilities. Works to shape a culture of excellence by acting as the public face of the council and a role model for others. Encourages co-operation and communication across political and council boundaries.

## positive indicators

- provides visionary and charismatic leadership, inspires trust in others and gains commitment to policies and decisions
- shapes a culture of excellence and acts as a role model for appropriate behaviour, ethical practice and democratic process
- builds strong relationships with senior officers and cabinet based on open communication, co-operative working and trust
- acts as the public face of the council and champions council needs in regional and national debates
- works across political and council boundaries to foster communication and encourage co-operation
- well prepared and able to troubleshoot, judges what to get involved in and when to say 'No'
- committed to learning, developing others and sharing best practice
- effectively 'juggles' numerous, potentially conflicting, responsibilities

## negative indicators

- maintains personal control by imposing views and being overly directive
- demonstrates partiality for own party members and uses position to promote party agenda to the detriment of wider council needs
- defensive, avoids making difficult or unpopular decisions and unwilling to admit mistakes
- lacks clear parameters between own role and that of CEO, fails to delegate or make use of others' strengths
- overly reactive, fails to plan ahead or foster a sense of mission
- does not encourage communication with community or promote the council, lacks public recognition as a figurehead
- inconsistent in style and behaviour, fails to 'walk the talk' or set an example for others
- lacks detailed knowledge of different council sectors and fails to integrate information to provide an overview of council functioning