

Appointments to Essex County Council Outside Bodies: The role of Councillors

Introduction

At Essex County Council we have a number of Other or Outside Bodies, these are listed at Appendix 4 of the [Constitution](#). Members are appointed to a diverse range of bodies for diverse reasons. This note provides an overview of an Essex County Councillor's role on these bodies.

We will refer to these bodies as outside or other bodies or bodies throughout this note.

Each year at Annual Council an update of Outside Bodies and their appointments is presented to Members.

Benefits

Essex County Council can benefit from our members being involved in these outside/other bodies, some of the benefits include:

- Providing knowledge, skills and insight
- Providing local accountability and/or democratic input
- Maintenance of strong communications links and good relationships between the body and the Council
- Protection of the council's investment or assets.

Types of bodies

There are many types of other bodies, these include:

- Joint Committees
- Boards of charity or voluntary sector organisations
- Advisory Boards
- Schools
- Partnership boards
- Local, Regional or National Boards and Committees
- NHS bodies

Each organisation will have its own management and rules that govern the body, it is important that members understand these for any appointment they undertake.

What is a councillor's role on these bodies?

The roles vary depending on the nature of the specific body, however it is important that members comply with any duties placed upon them by the outside body as well as those by the county council.

Here are things you should be doing as an ECC appointee on an outside body:

- Ensure when you are appointed to a body you understand the organisation and the role you have been appointed to, it is your responsibility to ensure you understand what your role is and learn about the body you have been appointed to. We can give you advice if you need it.
- You are expected to attend meetings of the body on a regular basis and provide apologies if you cannot attend. If you are unable to attend regularly

due to other commitments, you should speak to an officer or senior member of ECC and discuss your suitability for the role.

- You should read the agenda papers in advance of any meeting that you attend.
- You should understand whether you will receive any allowance or expenses and make sure you follow the rules and declare this where appropriate. You must only claim once for any expense claimed.
- You must observe and maintain confidentiality in both directions, it may be helpful to remind yourself of the principles of the ECC code of conduct in advance of a meeting of the body.
- You should carefully consider any conflicts of interests and declare where appropriate. You should take advice from the Monitoring Officer in advance of any meeting where you have concerns.
- You should report back as necessary to the Council any activity undertaken or that the Council should know about, abiding by any confidentiality.
- Consider whether ECC should still be represented on a body and report back to officers any concerns.

Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interest can easily arise between your role as a councillor and your role on the body.

For example, a councillor may be appointed as a company director. A company director has a legal duty to act in the best interests of the company. This puts the Councillor in a conflicted position if they are then tasked with making a decision as a councillor which involves giving funding to the company. You are likely to have to declare an Other Registrable Interest or a DPI.

You probably cannot take part in a decision at ECC if it directly relates to an organisation where you are a trustee or a director.

The fact that you were appointed by ECC doesn't change whether or not there is a conflict of interest between your role as councillor and as a member of the outside body.

A role on another public body is less likely to lead to a conflict of interests but you still can't take a decision as a councillor to award funding to another public body.

It is very unlikely that a role on a joint committee or an advisory board would give rise to a conflict.

When making decisions at an outside body you should in the first instance seek advice from that body if you think there may be a conflict of interest between your ECC role and that body.

Further information

For further information please contact the Democratic Services Team by email democratic.services@essex.gov.uk

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