

Formal Council Questions and Responses

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1 **Question to the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Streetscene: 2018/11 - Member Officer Protocol**

Councillor R Mogford asked:

Regarding paragraph 7.1 of the members and officers protocol recently introduced:

Councillors are free to approach Officers of the Council to provide them with such information as they may reasonably need in order to assist them in discharging their role as a Member of the Council. This can range from a request for general information about some aspect of the Council's activities to a request for specific information on behalf of a constituent.

I understand from a colleague and indeed from a direct comment made by an officer working in Streetscene that you may have advised some of your junior officers NOT to speak to some or indeed all councillors. In fact one officer said they were not supposed to speak to me which could imply that this is a selective ban on talking to councillors which is even more concerning.

Can you therefore clarify your stance within your portfolio.

If you have imposed such a constraint then:

- Does it apply to all councillors including your fellow cabinet members and the leader or is it selective.
- Do you feel you are empowered to make such a constraint and if so under what authority are you able to this?
- Have you advised or consulted with the CEO of NCC with respect to placing any such constraints on staff within your portfolio and if so was he in agreement with that?

The Leader and Councillor R Jeavons both responded:

This is a selective extract from the Protocol and needs to be read in conjunction with the other sections relating to undue pressure, in particular paragraph 4.1 which provides that *"Wherever possible, Councillors should direct enquiries through Heads of Service or senior managers rather than approach more junior staff directly."*

This was reinforced in the e-mail from the Chief Executive dated 26th July 2018 to all Councillors, when he advised that *"...one of the key requirements of the protocol is for councillors to liaise through Heads of Service when you have queries about service issues"*

Therefore, I have not placed any constraints on individual staff within City Services. Junior staff have been advised that, in accordance with the Protocol, all Councillors are entitled to information about services but any requests must be directed through the Head of Service or, in his absence, senior managers. Junior staff should not be approached directly by Councillors. The Protocol applies to all Councillors; neither I nor any of my cabinet colleagues would contact junior officers directly without going through senior management first.

Members@streetscene was launched some 18 months ago, to simplify and constructively track issues reported to the department with timely responses. This service operates really well routing queries raised by members to the relevant officer to investigate, and answers fed back accordingly. A Further constructive meeting if required can be diarised with senior managers to resolve/discuss any outstanding issues.