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Thurrock Council
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Introduction to Democratic Services

 – Democratic &
Governance Services Manager

What is Governance and Why is it Important?

- ‘Governance’ describes how the Council makes decisions and the structures which support it
- It’s importance lies in Members & officers making clear, focussed and accountable decisions for Thurrock
- This is linked to the recent Government intervention and the Section 114 Notice
- Members need to engage and commit to active and informed decision making

Your role as a Councillor

Having been elected as a Councillor your role can essentially be split into two aspects, both of which serve your constituents:

- Undertaking casework to try and help with issues raised by residents in the ward you represent
- Participating in meetings of the Council and its committees which consider issues and make decisions that affect the wider area of Thurrock, including residents of your ward

Tools you will find useful for the job

- Mobile phone
- iPad (or other tablet device)
- Computer facilities in the Civic Offices
- Security pass

Remember, we are here to help you so please ask if you need something!

Members Services

Members Services are here to support councillors in fulfilling your ward roles. The service is the key point of contact for any Member needing practical support relating to your role as a councillor and engaging with the departments at the council.

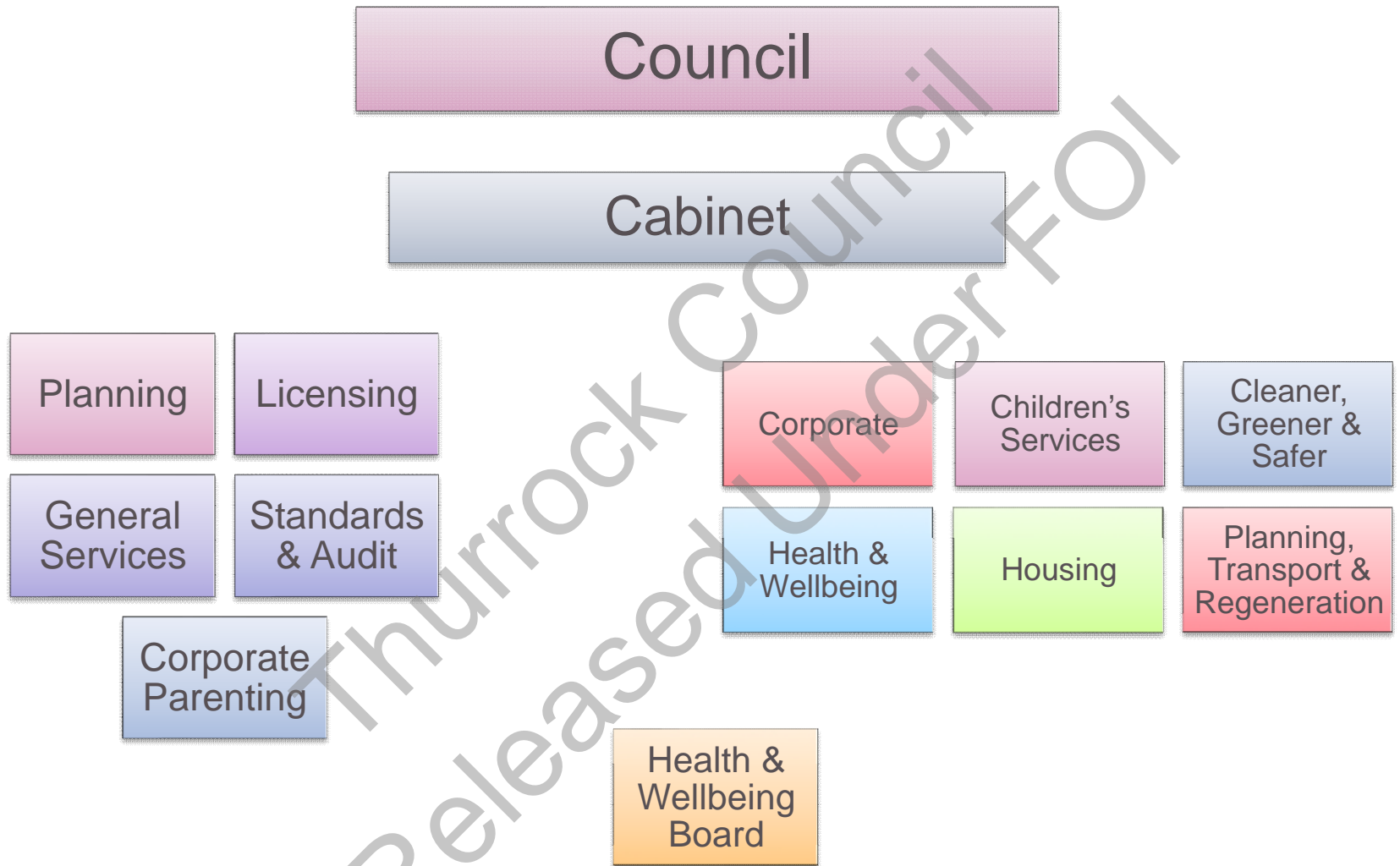
Members services has key functions relating to the Mayor and Leader's Office.

Democratic Services

The Democratic Services team ensures all the public committees of the Council are organised and run correctly. The team is here to help advise you on any questions surrounding the making of decisions or your involvement in committees. Other issues the team can provide help on include:

- Petitions
- Questions at Council and Cabinet
- School Appeals

The Council and its committees



Overview and Scrutiny (O & S)

- This is the critical friend of the Executive (Cabinet) and is crucial for checks and balances on decisions
- Currently 6 Committees covering all council services
- The majority of Members experience O & S so it's important to gain the skills necessary to be an effective committee member
- Referred to in the Constitution, Chapter 4

People you will need to know in Governance

- [REDACTED] – Chief Executive
- [REDACTED] – Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
- [REDACTED] – Democratic Services Manager (Statutory Scrutiny Officer)
- [REDACTED] – Governance Lawyer

What does the Intervention mean for Governance?

- Review of Overview and Scrutiny function
- Review of Committee structure
- Review of the Constitution
 - Include refresh of financial rules by CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy)
- Refresh of Member Training
 - Expectation of attendance at mandatory sessions
 - Attendance records reported to Standards & Audit Committee

How to behave in your role

- The Constitution includes:
 - Member Code of Conduct (Chapter 7, Part 3)
 - Member/Officer Relations Protocol (Chapter 7, Part 5)
- Nolan Principles of Public Life (page 231)
 - Selflessness
 - Integrity
 - Objectivity
 - Accountability
 - Openness
 - Honesty
 - Leadership

Meetings: What you should do

- LISTEN to all points of view, paying special attention to witnesses and guests at Committee as they have the information you are trying to consider
- RESPECT the Chair and only speak when the Chair has indicated that you can do so
- READ agendas and reports as best you can, ensuring you have prepared key questions for guests that help you reach the decisions you are required to make

Meetings: What you should do (continued)

- Remember work programmes and agendas are created through a collaborative process that requires Member input working with officers
- Turn your microphone on before you speak!
- Focus on the issues under discussion and try not to stray into different topics
- Stand up when invited to speak at Full Council

Meetings: What you should not do

- Forget to organise a substitute if you are not able to attend a particular meeting (except full council)
- Come to a meeting dissatisfied with paperwork or preparation without speaking to officers beforehand (officers are here to help and can solve most of the practical challenges of committee work)

Meetings: What you should not do (continued)

- Feel you are not qualified to make contributions to certain committee discussions (some of the best questions come from those who are not experts)
- Stand up to speak at other committee meetings in which you are participating

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Member Training

- Introduction to the Training Schedule
- Local Government Association (LGA) support for 2023/24
- Online courses
- Training is mandatory for a reason

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