

PROTOCOL FOR THE MEMBERS' PORTAL

INTRODUCTION

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This protocol aims to provide a clear procedure for both raising and escalating cases to ensure they are managed in a timely, efficient and effective manner.

This protocol was formulated to accompany the existing 'Protocol for Member/ Officer Relations' outlined in Part 5 (section 3) of the council's constitution. This protocol provides a guide to Members and Officers in their relations with each other and outlines some of the appropriate conventions within the Council, specifically with regards to the principles underlying the respective Codes of Conduct which apply to Members and Officers. In addition The Members Support Steering Group, made up of Members represented by all political groups on the Council, have oversight on the improvement and monitoring of the Portal and quarterly reports come to this group for scrutinising and recommendations are made as appropriate.

Using the Members' Portal

The Portal can be accessed through the council's intranet page. All enquiries should be submitted through the Portal which enables Members to report general service problems or make a request online to gather information on a range of services, including:

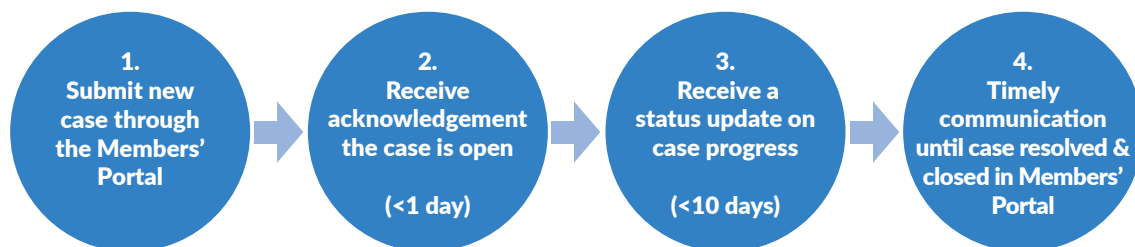
- Roads and pavements
- Street lighting and signs
- Bins and litter
- Environmental problems
- Parking
- Parks, coast and countryside
- Planning
- Licensing

For all other matters such as children's and adult services, environmental health and council tax there is a generic enquiry form.

Requesting services online is the cheapest, most effective method. Members can access their account and view their case histories as well as progress on their open cases at any time. Requests submitted through the portal are resolved quicker than direct resident requests submitted through the council's website. It is important that Members are mindful of ensuring the correct form is utilised within the portal and should contact the Member Support Team should they require any assistance.

WHAT CAN MEMBERS EXPECT?

Officers should always endeavour to respond to requests for information from Members promptly via the Members' Portal and should inform the Member through the Portal if there is likely to be any appreciable delay in dealing with an enquiry.



As a minimum the timescale for responding to correspondence should be as follows:

- All Members' enquiries submitted through the Members' Portal should be acknowledged within one working day
- A response should be provided within ten working days
- The response will not necessarily provide a resolution to the enquiry but will seek to provide an update on progress that has been made since the enquiry was acknowledged
- Officers will respond via the Members' Portal even if the enquiry has not been resolved to provide Members with an update on the actions being taken and to agree next steps.
- Any further updates will be provided as soon as information is available and within a time- frame appropriate to the specific case.

Escalation Process:

If no response has been received within ten working days of first submitting the enquiry, Members are able to escalate cases through the portal. This enables members to escalate an existing referral should it exceed the prescribed ten working day response target. Escalations are owned by Assistant Directors/Heads of Service who ensure that a detailed response is provided to the Member via the Members Portal.

Members will not be able to escalate enquiries that have not yet reached the ten working day limit. If an issue has already been raised and the case closed, for example, a streetlight that you reported as broken a year ago has since broken again, then a new case must be raised.

To ensure the Members' Portal and Officer time is used effectively, Assistant Directors and the Customer Feedback Team have a mechanism to provide information to the Member Support Team of any cases where a more appropriate reporting form should be used. This information will be used to assist councillors using the Portal, develop training sessions and drive Portal improvements and development.

Officers welcome any ideas Members have for improving the Members' Portal, you can feedback your comments to your Member Support Officer or Member Support Steering Group representative:

- Cllr. Chris Carubia (Chairperson)
- Cllr. Gary Bennett
- Cllr. Chris Cooke
- Cllr. Jenny Johnson
- Cllr. Tom Laing
- Cllr. Mike Sullivan
- Cllr. Tony Murphy

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Members must respect an Officer's duty not to disclose information to which a Member is not entitled. A Member's right of access depends on their role in the Council as summarised in the table below.

- All Members can expect an acknowledgement of their enquiry within one working day. Enquiries submitted via the Members' Portal will be responded to within ten working days. Updates on progress will be provided to Members as soon as information is available until the case is resolved.
- Members have the right to escalate any issue that has not been resolved after ten working days through the portal.
- Members are asked not to share officers' direct email addresses or telephone numbers to constituents without having gained permission from the officer concerned first.
- Members will not make public information which is confidential or exempt without the consent of the Council or divulge information given in confidence to anyone other than a Member or Officer entitled to know it.

PERSON SEEKING ACCESS	RIGHT OF ACCESS
Public and Press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to all Council reports, agendas, and minutes, except those reports which are exempt from public access - Access to the Forward Plan and Committees and Key Officer decisions - Rights under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and Data Protection Act 1998.
Independent Standards Committee Members	Public and Press Rights plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reports for local determination hearings under the Code of Conduct (including exempt information)
All Elected Members	Public and Press Rights plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Need to know' - These primary rights are in common law. Members have rights of access to information so far as access is reasonably necessary for them to perform their duties. - Right to inspect 'business to be transacted' by the Council.

Freedom of Information requests

Statistics in terms of case numbers raised per member through the portal is considered to be 'recorded information' and is therefore subject to the FOI legislation. Personal information pertaining to specific cases will not be disclosed.

OFFICERS' RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Officers will respond to Members enquiries in accordance with the timescales specified in this protocol. If the relevant Officer is on annual leave, a delegated Officer will deal with Member enquiries which come through the Members' Portal on the Officer's behalf.
- Officers will always provide detailed responses/information to Members upon requests, to which a Member is entitled.
- Officers will maintain open and timely communication with Members via the Portal: updating Members on progress, giving fair warning when there may be a delay, or providing the reason for a lack of progress so Members understand the situation.

Feedback

The appropriate forum to raise any issues with the portal is at the Members Support Steering Group that has representation from all political groups on the council. It can also be raised through the Members Support Team with your appropriate support officer as below:

First largest group

Gill Pinch

Email: gillpinch@wirral.gov.uk

Second largest group

Andrea Shillinglaw

Email: andreashillinglaw@wirral.gov.uk

Third and fourth largest groups

Victoria Simpson

Email: victoriasimpson@wirral.gov.uk