



Cardiff Council

Member Protocol for Accessing Research Support and Information

2024

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Protocol for Accessing Research Support and Information

Reason for the Protocol

1. This protocol has been developed in-line with The Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales relating to Research and Information Support and Services for Councillors. The guidance indicates that Democratic Services Committee's (DSC's) should put in place a protocol or other set of rules governing how Councillors should expect to be able to access and use research services. This will ensure that these facilities are accessible to all Members and are used equitably and proportionately.

(In: Research Support and Services for Councillors Statutory Guidance Sec 3.6 p.2).

Aim of this Protocol

2. The aim of this protocol is to provide details for Elected, Independent and Co-Opted Members (subsequently referred to as "Members") on how they could access a range of targeted research support and information to enable them to undertake their roles and any work associated with it effectively. This protocol will:
 - Specify the core principles that will guide the use and delivery of the support services outlined in this protocol.
 - Set out the types of targeted research support and information that can be accessed.
 - Outline the process for Members to access these services and information to ensure that the most appropriate level of support can be accessed.

Definitions

3. Primary research is data which is obtained first hand. This means that the researcher conducts the research themselves or commissions the data to be collected on their behalf. Primary research means going directly to the source, rather than relying on pre-existing data samples.
4. Secondary research is a research method that uses data that was collected by someone other than the primary user. Common sources of secondary data for social science include censuses, information collected by government departments, organizational records and data that was originally collected for other research purposes.

Principles that will apply when conducting research to support Members.

5. In line with the principles of good practice and compliance with existing legislation, the following principles will apply to the conduct of all research and those involved in research to support the work of elected Members and their Committees.

Principle 1. Compliance to Legal and Ethical Duties

6. All Members, and Council Officers who are involved in research activities, and in tasks such as the collecting, handling, reporting and storage of data and information must be aware of their legal and ethical duties and responsibilities.
7. Particular care must be taken in the design and conduct of research to ensure that it complies with the requirements of the UK Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Equality Act 2010, Health and Safety Regulations and any other legislation and guidance that would be relevant to research.
8. In line with the data protection legislation, particular care must be taken to ensure the confidentiality, anonymity of participants in primary research as well as the security of the processing, reporting and storage of personal data held as part of research.
9. All information collected for or as part of the research project is recorded, handled and stored appropriately and in such a way that it can be accurately reported, interpreted and verified, while the confidentiality of individual research participants remains appropriately protected. Data collection should be managed in a transparent way that demonstrates a commitment to their appropriate use of research and appropriate protection of privacy.
10. The design and conduct of the research and those pursuing it, must ensure that requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 have been considered. It should account for and respect the diversity and the multicultural nature of communities. Where relevant, it should take account of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, culture and religion and other characteristics in its research design, the collection and reporting of data and findings. Research findings, the data and information collected should reflect the diversity of the population.
11. The dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing of research participants e.g. service users, members of the public and all those involved in research must be the primary consideration when undertaking research.

12. Informed consent is at the heart of ethical practice. Appropriate arrangements will need to be set up for obtaining consent from children, from vulnerable adults, such as those with mental health problems or learning difficulties. Arrangements must be made to ensure that relevant research information on the purpose of the research and how it will be used is communicated to participants. Relevant information is provided in appropriate written or pictorial form, and that the role and responsibilities of parents, carers or supporters are clearly explained and understood.

Principle 2. Assessing Benefits and Risks

13. The approval of primary research requests and more complex research activities will be subject to an assessment of the anticipated benefits against the anticipated risks that it will bring to the participants / research respondents, to Cardiff Council. Where deemed essential, a formal, structured risk assessment will be undertaken as necessary. The risk benefit ratio, when sufficiently described and considered, will form part of the review and approval considerations for the Head of Democratic Services (HoDS).

Principle 3. Transparency and accessibility of findings

14. A record of the supported research activities undertaken for all elected members and its findings whether positive or negative can be shared with other elected members and be made publicly available in the language and format suitable for its audience. The access to these research findings will however be subject to adequate consent and privacy standards as well as compliance to the Council's legal duties and responsibilities.
15. Where required, information about research findings should be available to those who took part in the study, interested groups or communities and the general public in a format that is accessible and easy to understand.

Principle 4. Compliance with the Protocol

16. All requests for information and research support and its approval must be conducted in accordance with the requirements and principles of this research protocol.
17. Non-compliance to the protocol and its principles by those who are involved in the commissioning, approval, conduct, reporting or dissemination of research and by those who have accessed Council data and information are subject to the relevant control measures by legislation, the Member's Code of Conduct and the Information Commissioners Office (ICO).

18. Data or information sought by Members through this protocol should not be politically motivated or should not compromise Officers' political neutrality. All information and research findings generated through this protocol cannot be used for political purposes or for electoral campaign activities.

Types of Research Support and Information

19. Democratic Services will provide a range of targeted research support and information to all Members. The support that may be provided could supplement any information support that Elected Members may receive from their political groups.
20. The various types of targeted research support and information that will be made available to all Members of the Council will include:

Self-Directed Research

21. Self-Directed Research includes:
 - Easy access to the Council's corporate management information
 - Easy access to public sector information resources and open data websites
 - Training to effectively access and use public sector data.
22. The following should be used as a guide for Members undertaking any self-directed research or to clarify the requirements of a research request to Democratic Services.
 - What data or type/s of information do I need?
 - Is the information available from the Council's website?
 - Is this information available from the Council's existing published documents e.g. corporate plan, performance reports, budget report, audit report or the Council document weblinks available on the intranet?
 - Is the data or information available from Data Cymru or other public sector web-based information resources and Open Data websites?
23. A simple guide to identifying self-directed research is shown at **Appendix A**.

Supported Research

24. Supported research includes:
 - Access to secondary data, information and small-scale secondary research support.
 - Access to simple and small-scale primary research support.

25. The types of information or research support that Members could access should be related to a specific issue or issues which have an impact on their work for the Council and their constituents. The requested data, information or research support should be relevant to the delivery of the Council's priorities, scrutiny of decisions, review service performance, and the outputs or outcomes of the delivery of Council policy and services.
26. Prior to submitting a request for targeted research support and information, Members should have clear idea of the type and scope of data or information they require. This will require Members to **undertake some initial self-directed search of data or information** from the Council's internet website and the links provided on the Member Services intranet web page.

Complex Primary Research

27. Complex Primary Research can only be requested by Scrutiny Committees, Democratic Services Committee, Standards and Ethics Committee and Member Development activities to inform their work.

Access to Corporate Management Information

28. In accordance with the provisions in the Research Support and Services for Councillors Statutory Guidance (Sec 3.2 p3), Democratic Services will liaise with Council Departments to "proactively provide Councillors with management information and other data to ensure that they are kept informed about the business of the authority".
29. All Members will be able to access the current Cardiff Council corporate management information using links provided on the Member Services pages on the Intranet. These will include but not limited to:

Council

- [Calendar of Council and Committee meetings](#)
- [Council meeting webcasts](#)
- [Corporate Plan Dashboard](#)
- [Council Policies and Strategies](#)
- [Council Budgets](#)

Cabinet

- [Cabinet Forward Plan](#)
- [Cabinet Decisions](#)
- [Officer Decisions](#)

Scrutiny

- Scrutiny Committees Work Programmes
 - Children and Young People

- Community and Adult Services
- Economy and Culture
- Environmental
- Policy Review and Performance
- Scrutiny Task and Finish Inquiry reports

Planning

- [Planning Policies](#)
- [Recent Planning decisions and applications](#)

External:

- [Audit Wales](#)

30. Members will be provided with access to available corporate management information including those not listed above, unless there is a clear reason which prevents the Council or Cabinet from making such information available.
31. In cases when management information cannot be made available, Cardiff Council will specify why this information or matter is confidential, exempt from publication or from discussion in a public forum. Exempt information will include the description given in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 although a further explanation may be provided if appropriate.

(In: Research Support and Services for Councillors Statutory Guidance Sec 3.14, p.3)

32. The HoDS will be responsible for ensuring that corporate management information that is made available to members is up-to-date, and that new and relevant information relating to currently approved and proposed Council policies and projects/programmes is made available.
33. Additionally, the details of key Council officers who have responsibility for the formulation and dissemination of corporate management information will also be made available from Democratic Services.

Access to public sector information resources and Open Data websites

34. Elected Members will be provided with a list of links to online public sector information resources as well as links to Open data sources, to enable easy access to information or data sets that could be relevant to supporting their role and work that they undertake for the Council.
35. A list of UK and Wales based information resources and Wales Public Sector data resources will be available on a Member Services intranet webpage and the main open data sources are attached as an Appendix to this document.

36. As and when required, Members may also be signposted by the Member's Enquiries Services (MES) team or by Democratic Services Officers to relevant websites or weblinks where they can initially undertake a tailored and self-directed search of the specific data sets and information needed.

Members' Access to Documents and Information relating to Council or Cabinet Business

37. In addition to the provisions of this Protocol:

- a) The Access to Information Procedure Rules, found within Part 4 of the Constitution [Access to Information Procedure Rules.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#), specifically Rules 17 and 18, set out Members' additional statutory rights of access to documents relating to Council and Cabinet business; and
- b) *The Protocol on Members' Rights of Access to Information and Documents, found within Part 5 of the Constitution: [Protocol on Members Rights of Access to Informtion and Documents.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)*, clarify for Members what documents and information held by the Council they are entitled to see and how to request access to such information.

Access to specialist training – collection and interpretation of data

38. As specified in the Research Support and Services for Councillors Statutory Guidance (Sec 3.2 p.1), all Members will be offered some training support to enable them to effectively search and access information and data needed from selected Open data or benchmarking websites. Members can access specialist training with Data Cymru or similar organisations via a request to the HoDS. This training is intended to enhance Members' knowledge and skills to effectively search and use publicly available local government data resources.
39. The details of the specific courses on offer and the schedule of training will be communicated to all Members periodically by the Head of Democratic Services (HoDS) when opportunities arise or on request from the Democratic Services Committee to co-ordinate training for all members.

Supported Research.

Request for Secondary Data Research (Corporate)

40. All Members can request officer support to collect secondary data or information from Council Service Directorates. This is data or information that can be extracted from various datafiles or from existing corporately held documents i.e. how many children looked after are supported by the Council.

41. Members should request this type of information and research support using the Council's Member Enquiry System with a category of "Research". This enquiry will then be routed to the HoDS for action and enable all research requests to be recorded and managed.
42. To support the effective use of Democratic Services staff and resources as well as ensuring that any work already undertaken will not be duplicated, Members should confirm if any self-directed search of the data sets or information has been undertaken. Support can be provided by Democratic Services to assist with developing a research request and a checklist of the support available is provided at **Appendix B**
43. The Member Enquiry System will aim to deliver the data and information requested from the Councils service area directorates within 10 working days (two weeks) of submitting the request.

Request for Small Scale Secondary Data Research (existing external data)

44. Alternatively, Members can request officer support to undertake small-scale secondary research that involves the gathering and collation and/or summary of existing secondary data or information held by Cardiff Council and/or its public sector partners.
45. When logging a request for small-scale secondary research on the members enquiry system Members must provide details of the secondary data sets, information or documents that they require from the relevant Council Service Directorates and /or its relevant partners. This will ensure that Council officers dealing with the request have clarity on the type of information required, its scope, its presentation format and how the information will be used.
46. The following guidance should be used when requesting small scale secondary research or request for information:
 - What data, information or document is required?
 - How will this information be used? Note: The data or information requested cannot be used for political purposes or electoral campaign activities.
 - Scope / coverage of the data or information required, please specify the following:
 - Time scale – duration or the specific years covered.
 - Geographical coverage – the area that will be covered or included e.g. ward level, local authority level, Wales wide including comparable authorities.

- Demographic characteristics – age, sex, gender, employment, ethnicity, service user type etc.
- Other subject or topic limitations – what variables should it include and/or not include.
- Presentation format – how will data sets or information be presented?
- Date when data or the information is required.

47. Where more time will be required to provide the requested information or data sets, Members will be advised on the anticipated time frame for the delivery of data and information requested. Democratic Services or the service Directorate will also advise members via the MES team if data or information requested is not available or stored by the Council.

Request for small scale primary research support.

48. Support to undertake small scale and simple primary research can also be requested from the Democratic Services team using the Member Enquiry System. Primary research involves gathering data that has not been collected before which will require collecting the data or information directly from the source. The principal method of collecting this primary data would typically involve simple survey questionnaires circulated by Members to a limited number of their constituents.
49. Primary research for individual Members can only be used support their constituency work or as part of any other work undertaken for Cardiff Council. Members can be supported by Democratic Services to assist them to confirm the details of any of the information required for small-scale primary research (as set out below).
50. When requests for small scale primary research support are logged, Members will be required to provide as much detail as possible to assist the HoDS in understanding the planned scope and in determining the level of resources that may be required.
- a. All submitted request should include no more than 10 topic related questions not including a limited number of demographic monitoring questions. Selected monitoring questions relating to age, gender, employment, and ethnicity may be included in the survey as deemed relevant to analysis of the results.
 - b. As part of their request, Members are to include a list of the key questions that they would like to be included in the survey. These questions could be amended or refined to ensure that these meet the methodological requirements of effective survey design.

- c. The standard level of 50 hard copy versions of the survey questionnaires can be requested by each Member for each small-scale primary research topic. Where more than 50 hardcopy versions are needed, Members will need to include in their submission the reasons why a higher number of hardcopy questionnaires are required. The HoDS approval of requests for more than 50 hardcopy versions will be subject to availability of resources.
 - d. Knowledge of the risks relating to the conduct of the research and any issues that may arise should be declared as part of the request. This will assist Democratic Services in ensuring that risks are effectively managed and issues that may arise can be sufficiently dealt with.
 - e. Members must also confirm in writing that the findings of research supported or undertaken by Democratic Service on their behalf will only be used to support their work for the Council and will not be used for political purposes and/or electoral campaign activities.
 - f. On completion of data collection, Members will be supplied with a survey software (SNAP) generated summary of findings. Requests for additional and more complicated analysis (e.g. cross tabulations) and the formulation of more tailored survey reports and/or additional charts of survey finding will need to be logged as a new request on the MES Halo portal, with HoDS approval, subject to availability of resources.
 - g. Additional information and/supporting documentation may be requested by the HoDS in support of each submission to seek clarity on the scope and the level of resources that will be needed to support the work.
51. A checklist for developing a small-scale Primary Research request is provided at **Appendix C**.
 52. All submitted requests will be reviewed by the HoDS who will determine if the research requests can be supported. A written response to the submitted request will be provided within 10 working days of submission and the Member Enquiry will be closed.
 53. HoDS will have the overall responsibility for managing the demand for the small-scale primary research requests and for allocating resources to deliver the required outputs. It is not guaranteed that all submitted requests will be approved.
 54. Democratic Services will aim to deliver the outputs required within a 6–10-week period depending on available capacity and existing workload. Where multiple requests for support for this type of small-scale primary research are received,

the HoDS may need to prioritise demand and advise the commissioning Members on a feasible delivery schedule for outputs required.

Complex Primary Research

55. Democratic Services has a dedicated Principal Research Officer who can undertake more complex and rigorous research activities for the Council's Scrutiny Committees, the Democratic Services Committee, the Standards and Ethics Committee and any other Committees of the Council.
56. It is intended that this capacity will provide Members with rigorously collected and analysed new primary research and evidence that will enable Members to effectively review and scrutinise Council decisions and effectively engage with, and support, policy development.
57. Committee Chairs, with the support of the HoDS, can commission complex research to be undertaken to support work relating to their committees. Examples of different types of research that could be commissioned and undertaken may include the following:
 - **Examining Citizen or Service User Perspectives** – results from this type of research will identify or establish citizen priorities in a particular area or will assess the impact of an intervention on service users. This research may involve the use of quantitative methodologies such as a survey or qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups or workshops.
 - **Reviewing 'Current Practice' and 'Good Practice'** – this type of research involves looking into the interventions and policies that have been adopted by other organisations and evaluating the solutions or practices that have been implemented. 'Current Practice' research specifically identifies "what works" and "what doesn't work" and may identify expertise in a particular area or field. 'Good Practice' research draws attention to 'what works' as well as highlighting those interventions that can be replicated locally. This research is particularly useful in identifying and gaining an understanding of the different variables that affect the success of a particular intervention or change. This will also provide useful insight into the different causes and strategies for change as well as problems encountered. Data can be collected from both primary and secondary sources, with the findings presented in a briefing report to Members. The review of current and good practice can also be used alongside performance 'benchmarking' research activities.

- **Assessing Impact** – This involves research that will examine the possible consequences or impact before or after the implementation of a particular policy or intervention on a specific group or population. The impact assessment can look at environmental, economic or social impacts or a combination of all three.
58. Request for specialist support from the Principal Research Officer can be accessed via the structured research Commissioning process - see attached **Research Commissioning** process shown at **Appendix 4**. Request for this type and level research of support should be raised with the relevant Committee and formally requested by the Committee Chairs and in dialogue with the HoDS.
 59. Through a structured research commissioning process, this dedicated research capacity will work with, assist and provide expert advice to Committee Chairs, Principal Scrutiny Officers and HoDS in focusing the research problem or topic area and evidence gaps.
 60. This research capacity will be responsible for the structured scoping out and design of the research project. This will involve the formulation of a detailed research project brief identifying the appropriate research approach and methodology to deliver the research outputs required within a predefined timescale.
 61. The schedule for delivery of this type of research will be determined following the completion of the full and comprehensive research project brief.
 62. The final research brief will be submitted for approval and signed off by key stakeholders including the HoDS, Committee Chairs, Principal Scrutiny Officer (PSO), and Service Area Directorate Managers who are involved in commissioning the research.
 63. Where there are conflicting resource demands for this capacity, the HoDS, in liaison with Committee Chairs, PSOs and other stakeholders, will decide on where specialist research capacity will be allocated and prioritise and schedule the delivery of any commissioned research projects.
 64. Capacity to undertake specialist research work may also be commissioned from the corporate research team or from external research providers if existing capacity is not available. This type of commissioning will have a financial and resource impact and will only be agreed if suitable funding can be identified.

Appendices

Appendix A: Member guide for Self-Directed Research

Ser	Description	Response
a.	What data or type/s of information do I need?	
b.	Is the information available from the Council's website?	
c.	Is this information available from the Council's existing published documents e.g. corporate plan, performance reports, budget report, audit report or the Council document weblinks available on the intranet?	
d.	Is the data or information available from Data Cymru or other public sector web-based information resources and Open Data websites?	

Note: Research findings cannot be used for political purposes or political or electoral campaign activities.

Appendix B: Initial Support for Developing a Research Request

The following support can be provided by Democratic Services Officers to Members to assist them in clarifying the details of their research request:

Ser	Description
a.	Assistance to determine the focus of the topic or subject of research.
b.	Clarifying the scope of the research and advice on limitations of the methodology, and legal and ethical considerations.
c.	Formulating a maximum of 10 methodologically sound questions relevant to the research topic.
d.	Preparation of an on-line survey questionnaire including a SNAP weblink and QR code or hardcopy printed version of questionnaire. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distribution of survey by post/hand delivered using the members correspondence or email.• return of responses• Inputting of completed hardcopy questionnaire into the survey software.
e.	Conduct of the research, reporting and dissemination of its findings.
f.	Provision of survey software generated summary or headline findings of the research results.

Note: Research findings cannot be used for political purposes or political or electoral campaign activities.

Appendix C: Checklist for Small Scale Primary Research

Ser	Description	Response	X/✓
1.	<u>Research Problem or Topic</u>		
a.	What do you want to find out?		
b.	What is the subject or topic of investigation?		
c.	What questions would you like to ask?		
d.	Where available, please include a list of questions that could be included in the survey.		
e.	What do you want to find out?		
2.	<u>Research Rationale and Use of Research Findings?</u>		
a.	What is/are the reasons for undertaking this research?		
b.	How will findings/information be used?		
3.	<u>Research Scope</u>		
a.	What can be included or cannot be included as part of the subject area or topic of the research		
b.	Who will be involved in the research?		
c.	Who are the target respondents?		
d.	What geographical area will be covered? – Ward area, Cardiff wide, Local authority level.		
e.	What demographic characteristics should be included – age, sex, gender, employment, ethnicity, service user type etc.		
4.	<u>Potential risks and issues associated with research.</u>		
a.	What risks or issues may arise when during the conduct – collection of data, reporting and dissemination - of the research process?		
b.	How will these risks be managed?		
5.	<u>Total Number of Questions in Survey.</u>		

Ser	Description	Response	X/✓
a.	It is recommended that no more than 10 questions (excluding monitoring questions) will be included in short survey.		
b.	If more than 10 questions should be included in the survey, please specify estimated total number and provide reasons why.		
6.	<u>Number of questionnaires required:</u>		
a.	50 possible respondents would be the normal level of questionnaire provided.		
b.	If greater than 50 respondents are required, please specify total numbers and reasons for the higher level of respondents necessary for the research.		
7.	<u>Date when Summary Findings are required:</u>		
a.	The date when findings can be made available will be no less than 60 days from when request for support has been approved by HOD		

Note: Research findings cannot be used for political purposes or political or electoral campaign activities.

Appendix D: Primary Research Commissioning Process

