

BENCHMARKING SUPPORT SERVICES TO MEMBERS DECEMBER 2015 / JANUARY 2016

AUTHORITY	NO of MEMBERS	MEMBERS SUPPORT PROVISION
Gwynedd	74 Independent – 18 Labour - 4 Liberal Democrats – 2 Plaid Cymru – 37 The Voice of Gwynedd – 13	All Members are offered an iPad for their work as Councillors. . The three main parties have part time admin support for their Group. The political group assistants do various jobs for their Members, including some research, typing work, drafting letters and arranging meetings.
Carmarthen	74 Plaid Cymru – 29 Labour – 22 Independent – 21 Other – 2	Dedicated support for the Chair of Council and the Leader and assistance to Executive Board Members and the Leader of the Main Opposition Group. General administrative support to all Members including assistance with writing letters, surgery posters, newsletters and general research. Notification and preparation of notices for Councillors' surgeries. Arrangements for attendance at conferences and meetings outside the County (including rail travel and accommodation). Processing Councillor Enquiry Forms and obtaining written responses within the target date of 10 working days and acting as a central contact point for Councillors for their general enquiries for Departments and providing information regarding officer contacts within Service Departments. Office supplies, such as pens, pencils, files, paper, envelopes etc. to a reasonable level. No payments are made towards postage costs; Full cost of installing a telephone line for new councillors who have no telephone and a second broadband line for the exclusive purpose of providing on line data services (e.g.) intranet, internet & email). Provision of a Broadband line at their home and personal I.T. equipment which includes an Apple iPad, Standard laptop and printer. Mobile Phones are also provided free of charge to Executive Board Member to assist them in fulfilling their duties. We do not provide assistance towards telephone

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		<p>costs i.e. line rental & call charges.</p> <p>In addition Members are able to use I.T. facilities that are available in the Members' rooms.</p> <p>Staffing Structure Committee Support – Principal Officer and 5 Committee Officers Civic & Member Support Members – Principal Officer, Senior Member Support Officer, 4 x Member Support Officers</p>
Swansea	<p>72 Labour – 48 Liberal Democrats – 12 Independent group – 7 Conservative – 4 Independent – 1</p>	<p>No political assistants Cabinet team – 2 Full-time Officers Democratic Services team – Head of Democratic Services; 4 x Committee Officers 1 dedicated Member Support Officer; 1 x IT officer and 1 x Admin Assistant shared with Election tem</p> <p>30/ 72 Members receive direct Member support others are self-reliant. Have invested in a Councillor Case Management System developed by Nottingham City Council supported by 1.8 Full time equivalent posts.</p> <p>Members provide their own IT.</p>
Blaenau Gwent	<p>42 Labour – 33 Independent – 9</p>	<p>One officer that provides direct support to Members. However, during busy periods or periods of absence the officer is supported by the Democratic Services Team (4 officers in total). This officer provides various support to Members including taking dictation and sending correspondence relating to constituency work.</p>
Torfaen	<p>44 Labour – 30 Independent group – 6 Conservative – 4 Plaid Cymru – 2 Independent – 2</p>	<p>One Dedicated Members Services Officer who undertakes research; Member Development and training. Committee & Members Services merged as a team and provide support to Members in governance terms.</p>

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Nottingham	55 Labour - 50 Conservative - 5	5.5 full-time Political Group Admin & Member support and assistants. Each Support Assistant manages 4 wards; support Member with casework; correspondence; member enquiries; research & preparing briefings. Developed in-house Councillor Case Management System.
Kirklees	69 Labour – 34 Conservative – 18 Liberal Democrat – 10 Green and Valley Independents – 7	Member Services team looks after the day-to-day support for the councillors, such as processing and chasing member enquiries, dealing with training, allowances etc. As part of the Member Services team have an Opposition Support Officer, who gives secretarial type support to the opposition members (dealing with ward enquiries, arranging meetings, calendars etc.). There are also PAs to the Leader and Cabinet Members who do the same for them. None of the posts are political, as they only deal with Council-related issues and are paid for by the Council.
Islington	48 Labour – 47 Green – 1	Two Group Offices. 3 staff in the Labour office and 1 in the Lib Dem Office 1 Backbench Officer who help members with casework but the Leader and the Executive all have PA support to do their casework. Members Services pays for the hire and security for all members surgeries. However Members are encouraged to try and hold them in council buildings where there will be no charge but that is not always possible. Cllrs can book rooms for meetings they might have in connection with their duties as a Cllr free but only if it is directly connected and only if they were also attending. We would not cover for example a backbencher who wanted to hire a hall for 100 to hold a meeting about something that was happening in his ward as if he wanted to do that he could pay for that himself from his allowance. Again travel could be arranged for Cllrs in connection with council duties and only if authorised beforehand and only if it was for travel outside the borough.

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Kensington & Chelsea	50 Conservative – 37 Labour – 12 Liberal Democrat 1	<p>The Leader of the Majority Conservative Group has his own office, and other Cabinet Members (7) have a shared office with a PC each, but all other Members only have use of a Members Room with two PCs. The Minority Lab Group have a Group Office</p> <p>Dedicated Member Support but within Democratic Services Team provide considerable diary and other support to the Leadership and CMs but political groups have no dedicated support and backbenchers, despite having access to one Councillors' Secretary, are largely self-sufficient: we provide no casework support, but help to publicise surgeries.</p> <p>The Council provides consumables but home consumables (paper, cartridges etc.) are paid from Basic Allowance. Members can claim up to £1,500 of IT equipment each 4 year term under our Members IT Scheme but only a handful of members claim this.</p> <p>Secretarial resources are provided such as booking rooms of non-committee meetings and arranging travel but such requests are not common.</p>
Medway	55: Conservative 36 Labour 15 UKIP 3 Independent 1	<p>Support to members is undertaken by 2 Democratic Services Support Officers, the management of whom is shared between Head of Members Services & Elections and Head of Democratic Services.</p> <p>The Leader of the Administration Group and Leading Opposition group have PA support. The 2 Democratic Services Support Officers provide a very low level of support to members in terms of correspondence but will occasionally assist with non-standard items. Members are expected to be self-sufficient in this regard, but much of their correspondence is done by email anyway. A postage budget of just over £3000 is budgeted to meet the cost of anything that is sent to Members or out by Members via the post room.</p> <p>No support is provided in terms of producing, printing or posting ward surgery notices; printing of non-politically newsletters; community information. Ward surgery information is posted on the Council's web pages. Up until this year a printed Year Book was produced as well as maintaining</p>

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		<p>an electronic version on our webpages and Intranet. From next year we are no longer going to provide a printed version.</p> <p>All 10 Members of the Cabinet have either a pc or laptop in their shared offices. The Labour (Opposition) Group Leader and Deputy Leader have computers and their Group room also has a computer that any of their members can use while in the building.</p> <p>All members can purchase a computer, laptop or tablet device through our Purchase scheme whereby the costs are deducted monthly from their basic allowance over a period of 2-3 years.</p> <p>The Cabinet Members and Opposition leader have been provided with Blackberry's/smart phones.</p>
ADSO Data - Council unknown	60	<p>Councillors are expected to pay for stationery out of their allowances. Travel (including mileage claims where driving is the most efficient mode of transport), subsistence and accommodation are paid according to specific limits which are set out in instructions on the claim form. Childcare costs can also be claimed up to set amounts (both in terms of time and hourly rates).</p> <p>Each group (3) has a separate Political group officer. Each group officer has accommodation in the Town Hall and access to Council resources (PC, printer, phones, stationery, etc.). As representation of the third political group is small (6/60 councillors), the PGO is contracted to work only 10 hours per week. The other PGOs work full-time. (NB we are about to begin recruiting for a full-time PGO and a political advisor for the Labour Group...watch this space.)</p> <p>Member support comprises two caseworkers who look after backbench councillors and the ward work of Cabinet members. They are managed by the Mayoralty and Councillor Services Team Leader. Casework is logged by the team who also identify the appropriate officer(s) to provide the substantive response. They also prepare holding responses and conduct 'chase-up' calls/emails as required. A Customer Relationship Management</p>

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		<p>(CRM) automated system is currently in beta testing which will allow councillors to log their own casework and check its progress via a dedicated and secure web portal.</p> <p>There is a separate Executive Support Team for the Leader and Cabinet, who deal with Cabinet-specific issues. Ward work issues raised with Executive members are directed to the general Member Support team.</p> <p>The team book surgeries on request (councillors themselves are required to identify suitable locations) and advertise arrangements through the website and posters. Where rental is charged (some venues are free), costs are met from a budget held in the Member Support team.</p> <p>Member Services will book rooms for ward work meetings and liaise with other service areas, e.g., HR, on queries concerning pay, tax, etc. This team does not get involved in travel arrangements or political group meetings, which are organised by the PGOs.</p>