

PLANNING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS PROTOCOL

The Council may appoint two Members jointly to share the position of Planning Committee Co-Chair. This Protocol sets out the arrangements and expectations when the role is shared.

Why have Co-Chairs for Planning Committee?

This Council has previously acknowledged the unique workload placed on members of Planning Committee, as outlined in previous Members' Scheme of Allowances Reviews. This particularly applies to the Chair of Planning Committee, due to their additional responsibilities in respect of preparing for meetings and their role in assisting with formal Planning Committee procedures, such as pre-briefings, decision notice referrals and appeals. In order to alleviate this burden, the Council has adopted a Planning Committee Co-Chairs Protocol as set-out below.

The potential benefits include:

- Making the role of Co-Chair potentially available to those Members who would not otherwise be able to make the necessary time commitment for whatever reason;
- Ensuring that Uttlesford District Council does not lose out on the leadership contribution of Planning Committee Co-Chairs who are also carers, parents or in full-time education or work;
- Increasing the capacity and broadening the capability of Co-Chairs;
- Recognising the likely workload of the position;
- Creating opportunities for a more representative sample of Members to take the Co-Chair of Planning Committee, for example facilitating a gender balance.

What is a Co-Chair and how does it work?

- Two Members essentially fulfil one Chair position on a job-share basis.
- There is only one formal Chair of a Planning Committee meeting at any one time and only that Chair has the casting vote.
- The other Co-Chair attends the meeting as an ordinary committee member when their counterpart is in the Chair.
- Outside of meetings, the Co-Chairs arrange between themselves how their responsibilities are shared and ensure that other Members and Officers are informed.
- The Co-Chairs will each receive a Special Responsibility Allowance, or a proportion of one.

Ways of Working

1. Co-Chairs will agree between themselves the arrangements for chairing meetings. They may take turns at alternate meetings, or on a periodic rotation, or otherwise, providing that when the relevant Co-Chair is not available the other Co-Chair will chair the meeting.
2. Pre-agenda meetings, pre-meetings, other cross-party briefings for Chairs and spokespersons, and any other Chair's briefings, may be attended by both Co-Chairs.
3. Co-Chairs must arrange between themselves how their responsibilities are to be shared at each meeting and ensure that other Members and Officers are informed about the arrangements by the time of the Co-Chairs' Briefing. This is important for clarity and certainty.
4. Outside of formal committee meetings, Co-Chairs will each act as the first point of contact for their areas of the committee's business when working with council officers, residents, partners etc.
5. Email correspondence from Members and Officers should be sent to both Co-Chairs.
6. Officers are not required to obtain agreement from both Co-Chairs when seeking guidance on a course of action. They will assume that any steer or guidance provided by one Co-Chair is on behalf of both. Co-Chairs shall be responsible for consulting each other on issues and for reaching a consensus prior to providing guidance to Officers.
7. In the unlikely event of a disagreement between the two co-chairs as to which will chair an upcoming committee session, the chair shall be taken by the first-named co-chair as appointed by full Council, who would otherwise be equal in every respect.

Remuneration

It is a matter for the Independent Remuneration Panel to consider the remuneration of Co-Chairs and make recommendations during the Members' Scheme of Allowances annual review.

It is however the responsibility of the Co-Chairs to make sure that their joint workload is spread proportionately so that, for example, neither is doing a full-time post for half the Special Responsibility Allowance.

Co-Chairs

Two Chairs ("Co-Chairs"), each with equal full responsibility for the role, may be appointed to the Planning Committee in recognition of the fact that it meets more frequently than other committees.

A maximum of two Co-Chairs may be appointed to Planning Committee. If Co-Chairs are appointed, then a Vice Chair shall not be appointed to the committee.

Only one Co-Chair can chair a committee meeting and have the casting vote at any one time. The other attends the meeting as an ordinary committee member. The Chair will be identified to the public at the start of the meeting.