

How councils work:
an improvement series for councillors and officers

Roles and working relationships: are you getting it right?



 AUDIT SCOTLAND

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Part 2. Key points for action



There are a number of actions councillors and councils must take to strengthen working practices and working relationships.



The tables below outline key points for action for councillors and officers.

Supporting good working relationships

- Councils must:
 - regularly assess how well councillors and officers work together and identify any areas for improvement
 - consider introducing mechanisms to encourage greater communication between councillors and officers, and strengthen working relationships.

Improving awareness and understanding about roles and responsibilities

- Councils must:
 - ensure councillors and officers reflect on how well they understand the distinctions between their roles and responsibilities
 - ensure all newly elected councillors are provided with training and support to help them understand their roles and responsibilities
 - work with councillors to increase their awareness, understanding and use of governance procedures; and explain the purpose of key documents in supporting working practices.

Ensuring governance arrangements are fit for purpose and up to date

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councils must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – review governance arrangements, including standing orders and schemes of delegation on a regular basis, to ensure these documents are relevant and fit for purpose; and communicate any changes to councillors and officers – review schemes of delegation to ensure they clearly establish and explain statutory officers' roles – consider developing a local councillor-officer protocol and multi-member ward protocol to support working practices – prepare an annual governance statement to increase transparency about governance arrangements, and to identify and communicate areas for improvement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ensure they are aware of expected behaviour and conduct set out in the <i>Councillors' Code of Conduct</i> and make themselves familiar with the revised code when it is published later in 2010 – satisfy themselves that the chief financial officer has the necessary access and influence to fully discharge the statutory responsibilities of the role. |
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Continued overleaf...

Keeping up to date with a councillor's complex and evolving role

- Councils must:

- provide guidance, training and advice to councillors serving on external boards and highlight the specific responsibilities attached to these roles
- provide regular training and support to councillors to help them fulfil their roles
- review induction training and consider introducing practical guidance to provide new councillors with a more detailed understanding of what their roles and responsibilities mean on a day-to-day basis.

- Councillors must:

- communicate with officers and explain their training and development needs; and provide feedback on training courses to help ensure these meet their needs
- make better use of training and development opportunities to help them fulfil their role.