

Developing Council Teamworking

Residents expect us to work as a team: listening, acting together where we can, and putting their interests first.

That means thinking, acting, planning and developing more deliberately as a team. We already do some of this well, but there is room to make it more consistent.

In sport, a captain leads by example, encourages team play and team spirit, communicates well with different people, represents the team formally, and helps keep balance across the side. Those qualities are also relevant to civic roles such as chairman, leader or mayor.

There is another important quality: knowing when to let someone else take the lead. In football, good captains do not try to take every opportunity themselves. They recognise when another player is better placed, or would grow through the experience, and they put the team result first.

To work in this way, we should understand each member’s experience, skills and interests, so they can be used well in representing the Council and its residents. This might include military, business, community, technical, professional, voluntary or lived experience, depending on the situation.

Councillors should be matched to events where their experience, confidence, knowledge or interests best fit the purpose. This is not about excluding anyone, but about representing the Council well, developing members’ strengths, and securing the best outcome for residents.

Siobhan’s idea of a Council diary listing all events we are invited to is a practical one. It would help us choose appropriate representation, make better use of members’ strengths, and avoid decisions being shaped by habit, assumption or personal preference.

A simple next step would be to agree a light-touch way of recording members’ skills, interests and development goals, then use the Council diary to match representation to each event in a fair and transparent way.

Place Plan/ Connecting Cowes Developments

This approach to teamworking also links to our wider Place Plan and Connecting Cowes work. If we want Cowes and Northwood to lead well locally, we need both a clear strategic framework and a Council that uses the strengths of its members effectively.

Why Cowes? Because, with the work we have done on our Place Plan, we are ahead of the game. We already align with the British Standards, and our vision, as a Council, is in the right place. Our staff and Councillors all want the same thing, to get to the same destination. We want to be a lead authority and facilitator in Cowes and have a more productive, constructive relationship with the IW Council.

This also fits with thinking about governance in the Devolved Area. It is not a new idea; it is how any well-run organisation would operate. It is not party political, nor does it interfere with politics. Instead, it provides a framework for using different political views more constructively and productively. Democracy depends on different opinions, but it also depends on common ground. It should not be solely adversarial; those differences are our checks and balances, and should be respected as such.

Alongside reviewing and refreshing our now outdated Place Plan, the next step is to begin developing local policies and strategies that sit within, and are approved by, the IW Council. These could cover the economy, planning, transport, conservation, the environment, public spaces and any other areas where local policy would help us make practical improvements.

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