

Glossary

This glossary explains key terms used in the Council's Constitution but is not part of the Constitution.

Adjourned

To suspend (i.e., a meeting) with the intention to resume it later.

Annual Governance Statement

A public statement which reviews how well the Council has kept to its governance rules.

Annual Statement of Accounts

See Statement of Accounts.

Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

The Council's strategy for protecting its valuable resources which describes the expectations and practices to avoid their loss.

Asset Management Strategy

The Council's approach to getting the best possible value and revenue from things it owns (assets), such as buildings, land, roads, and technology.

Approved Supplier List

A list of suppliers which have met specific criteria to enable them to provide particular goods or services to the Council.

Balance Sheet

A statement of the Council's assets, liabilities, and capital at a particular point in time which details the balance of the Council's income and expenditure over the preceding period.

Budget

Every year the Council puts a financial plan in place which describes how and where the Council will spend money to provide services and deliver the aims which it set out in its corporate plan. It also sets the level of council tax which it will charge in the next financial year. The budget sets out the money which the Council intends to spend during the year against the money available which has been received in council tax, income, and grants.

Executive

Also known as the Executive, the Executive is the Council's decision-making body responsible for making the majority of decisions. The Executive makes decisions within a policy framework and budget set by the whole Council. The Executive is made up of the Leader and up to nine other Members, including a Deputy Leader.

Executive Member

An elected Member appointed to the Executive by the Leader. Some Executive Members are assigned responsibility for a specific portfolio and are sometimes referred to as Portfolio Holders. Executive Members can also make decisions when powers to do so are delegated to them by the Executive or Leader.

Capital and Investment Strategy

The Council's medium to long term plan for investing in its asset base.

Capital Programme

Part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan which sets out capital projects approved by full Council over a medium term, multi-year period.

Chair of the Council

The Chair of the Council is an elected Member who chairs meetings of the Council and carries out a variety of civic and ceremonial duties. The Chair is elected to be the Chair by the other Members, usually at the Council's Annual Meeting. The Chair cannot be a Executive Member and is assisted in their work by the Vice-Chair.

Chief Executive

The Council's most senior Officer who is responsible for the management and direction of the Council's staff. The Chief Executive is accountable to the Leader of the Council, the Executive, and the Council as a whole. The Chief Executive is also generally designated as the Council's Head of Paid Service - a statutory role. The postholder has powers set out in law as well as the powers given to them by this Constitution.

Chief Finance Officer

The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) is a Statutory Officer and the powers held by the CFO are set out in statute. The CFO is also referred to as the Section 151 Officer – this is because the role is given powers by section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. Every Council must appoint a CFO. The CFO is responsible for managing the Council's finances and providing expert financial advice to the Council. The CFO must be a qualified accountant and must ensure that the Council does not intend to spend more money than it has to carry out its plans (this is called a balanced budget).

Clear Days

Does not include the starting or finishing day. Example: for 5 clear days' notice: do not include the day when notice was given. If this was on a Tuesday, time starts to run on Wednesday. Notice would not be completed until 12.01am the following Wednesday. Saturday, Sunday, or bank holidays are not counted.

Code of Conduct (Councillor Code of Conduct / Officer Code of Conduct)

A set of rules which elected and co-opted councillors and officers must follow.

Commercial Agreement

A type of contract for goods or services in exchange for something in return, usually money.

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Commissioning

Within the Council, the process of buying services from outside the Council and monitoring and managing the purchase and carrying out of those services.

Committee

A Committee is a formal group of elected Members whose remit, terms of reference and operating rules are set out in the Council's Constitution. There are many different committees. Each one makes decisions about a specific area of responsibility – for example planning or licensing.

Confidential Information

In relation to meetings and reports this is information which the Council has received from a Government department on terms which cannot be disclosed publicly.

It can also be information which (i) the Council cannot disclose due to a court order or legislation or (ii) is not public, is information which was given to the Council in such a way that made it clear it was meant to be kept confidential.

Constitution

This governance document, or 'rule book', which sets out how the Council will make decisions and who will make those decisions. It also sets out how residents and others can participate.

Contract

An agreement which: may be oral, written, partly oral and partly written or implied from conduct between the Council and another person; gives rise to obligations which are enforceable or recognised by law (i.e., legally binding) and commits the Council to paying or doing something. A reference to a contract may also include a contract to which the Contract Procedure Rules apply and a "call off contract" means an order made or call off contract entered into under a Framework Agreement.

Contractors

See suppliers.

Contract Management

The process of ensuring the contract results in the benefits and outcomes envisaged and that the advantages secured during the tendering phase are realised and improved through further proactive performance management during its term.

Contract Management System

The IT system and associated processes used to support supplier and contract management, providing visibility and a single view of all Council contracts. It is also the Council's contract register.

Contract Procedure Rules

The part of the Constitution that sets out the procedures to be followed when seeking to establish a contract with an external supplier.

Council

The term often used to refer to the whole organisation (i.e., councillors and officers); but see full Council below. North Northamptonshire Council is led by councillors who are elected by the public.

They set the priorities and the budget for the organisation. Staff working for the Council (officers) deliver the day-to-day operations. The word Council is used to refer both to the organisation as a whole and specifically to the decision-making body.

Council Body

May include any Committee, Board, Panel, or informal working group.

Council Tax

The income collected from residents based on banded property values and which funds a significant proportion of council services.

Councillor

A councillor is elected and is a member of the Council. Councillors stand for election normally every four years and are accountable to the residents of a specific area (their electoral ward) but are responsible for making decisions for the entire council area. Councillors do not have to be a member of a political party, but most do. Those who do not are known as 'un-grouped' or 'independent' councillors.

Councillor Call for Action

The Councillor Call for Action allows councillors to refer matters of concern within the community to the relevant Board or Committee. The aim is to provide councillors with additional powers that enable them to respond to local community concerns which have proved difficult to resolve.

Debt Management Strategy

The Council's strategy to manage and recover the sums of money it is owed.

Decisions

The choices and agreements made on a particular issue. The Council's Constitution sets out the rules on how formal decisions are to be taken in compliance with the law (see also Key Decisions). The Constitution also sets out how decisions are to be recorded and published.

Development Plan

Means the Council's local plans and other documents that set out the policies and proposals for the development and use of land within the administrative area of North Northamptonshire Council.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

A disclosable interest means something which an elected Member must declare in a meeting relating to their role outside the Council which could impact on their decisions for the Council. A pecuniary interest is a financial interest as defined in 'The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.

Elected Member

See Councillor.

Executive

See Executive.

Executive Advisory Panel

Cross party meetings of elected members where policy is developed and recommendations are made to the Executive

Executive Director

The Council's most senior officers report directly to the Chief Executive and are accountable to Members and the Executive. These posts include the statutory Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and the Director of Children's Services (DCS).

Exempt Information

In relation to meetings and reports this means information which can be withheld from the public. It must pass one of seven tests in order for it to be exempt and it must also be in the public interest to do so. If an item is deemed to be exempt during a public meeting, then members of the public and any press have to leave the meeting while exempt information is being discussed. We set out the rules in the Access to Information Procedure Rules at Part 5 Section 4 of this Constitution.

EU Procurement Regulations

The Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA) entered into under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation, the European Community Treaty (EU Treaty)* and any relevant regulations, directives, or decisions of the European Community*; any Acts of Parliament or statutory instruments implementing the above for the time being in force in the United Kingdom; and any relevant judgements of the European Court of Justice* or UK courts.

**These will continue to be followed at the present time even though the United Kingdom has left the European Union.*

External Auditors

An independent auditor appointed to review the Council's financial and management arrangements.

Financial Year

The financial year for the Council is not the same as the calendar year. Our financial year starts on 1 April and ends on 31 March.

Financial Procedure Rules

The rules which set out how the Council will manage its financial affairs (in Part 9 Section 7 of this Constitution).

Financial Scheme of Delegation

The financial limits on spend set up by service area. More details are in Part 9.7. of the Constitution.

Follow On Decisions

Means a decision on consequential matters following a decision to approve a Planning

Application. These include but are not limited to: approval or discharge of planning conditions, legal agreements, and non-material amendments.

Forward Plan

A list of the 'key decisions' the Council will make over the next one to four months. The Forward Plan also includes a summary of any reports which will be presented to the Executive. You can view the Forward Plan for North Northamptonshire Council on its website.

Framework

A term used in different ways which refers to the way that the Council operates - for example, policy framework, commissioning framework, governance framework.

Full Council

The full Council is all the Members who make up North Northamptonshire Council. Full Council meets throughout the year with the meeting being chaired by the Chair. Full Council takes specific decisions, including setting the budget. It also appoints committees to make decisions about specific issues such as planning and licensing.

Function

Within the Council, a function is a service which the Council provides or an activity which it undertakes; or which it has a duty to deliver - for example housing and education.

Head of Paid Service

The Head of Paid Service is a Statutory Officer with overall responsibility for the employment of Council officers (generally the Chief Executive).

Hybrid

A model of governance that is legislatively Executive but encompasses the best of the Executive and Committee System governance arrangements to promote inclusive and transparent decision making.

Independent Person

The Council has to have at least one designated independent person who is not a councillor or a member of staff. The independent person is consulted about complaints made against councillors and also about the dismissal of any of the Council's statutory officers.

Key Decision

Key decisions are executive decisions (not those made by committee) and are defined in the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) (Regulations) 2012 and are decisions which: -

- Result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or making savings which are significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or

- Are deemed significant in terms of their effect on communities living or working within the area of the Council.

The Council has decided that a significant decision financially is £500k.

Leader (of the Council)

Members elect a person who will be the Leader of the Council. Usually this is the leader of the largest political group on the whole Council. The Leader of the Council is also the Leader of the Executive and will appoint up to nine other Members to form the Executive to take Executive decisions on behalf of the Council. The Leader can appoint up to two Deputy Leaders from the Members appointed to the Executive.

Legal Professional Privilege

Confidential communications between lawyers and their clients can be withheld from a court or from a third party using legal professional privilege.

Legislation

The Law which can be made by Parliament which takes the form of an Act of Parliament (a Statute) or Statutory Regulations or By-laws which can be made by the Council.

Light Touch Rules

A more relaxed set of rules for awarding contracts for certain services in relation to health and social care.

Medium Term Financial Plan

Sets out the Council's budget (revenue and capital) over a period of more than one year and is linked to the Corporate Plan and Service Plans.

Member

See Councillor.

Minutes

The formal written record of a meeting. Minutes of North Northamptonshire Council meetings are available on the Council's website.

Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer is a Statutory Officer responsible for the lawful and good governance of the Council, in particular the Constitution, decision-making and the conduct of councillors (including Town and Parish councillors) and officers.

Motion

A proposal for a discussion or debate.

Municipal Year

The period between annual meetings of the Council. The municipal year is not the same as the Council's financial year, which starts on 1 April. The municipal year usually starts in May but is not a fixed date and as such the number of days in a municipal year varies slightly.

Natural Justice

The right of all parties in proceedings to a fair hearing before an impartial tribunal.

Officer

Someone employed by the Council.

Scrutiny Committee

A Committee which supports and challenges the work of the Executive and help hold it to account. The Scrutiny Committee is made up of Members who are not part of the Executive.

Permission in Principle (PIP)

Means an application by a developer to the Council to determine whether a housing development is acceptable in principle only and does not include technical details. A Permission in Principle is not a grant of planning consent.

Planning Applications

Means planning applications for full and outline consent as well as applications for reserved matters approvals and, for the avoidance of doubt, excludes Permission in Principle (PIP) and Related Matters.

Planning Officer

Means an employee of the Council tasked with processing and evaluating planning applications.

Policy

A policy sets out a strategic objective for the Council and provides a framework of principles and guidelines which must be followed to achieve those objectives.

Policy Framework

Refers to the Council's strategies and policies as set out in Part 3 of this Constitution.

Point of Order

Where a Member considers that a breach of the Procedure Rules or legislation has occurred within a debate.

Portfolio

Within the Council, a portfolio is a specific area of responsibility - for example housing. You can view the portfolios and who is responsible for each area (the Portfolio Holders) on the website.

Procedure

The means by which a strategy or policy will be implemented or a process which must be followed.

Procurement

How the Council identifies, sources, selects, and manages the resources it needs to buy in to deliver services or meet its strategic objectives.

Proper Officer

A term used to refer to the Council's lead Officer for a particular function. The list of Proper Officers is in Part 9 of this Constitution.

Quorum

The minimum number of attendees who have to be present at a meeting of the Council, a Committee or Sub-Committee etc to conduct its business.

Related matters

Means applications for permitted development, prior approvals, advertisement consent, tree preservation orders, high hedges, and listed building consent.

Representations

Members of the public can give their views on any Executive or Executive Member reports or on any proposed decision by informing Democratic Services by the deadline outlined on the meeting agenda.

Reserves

Sums of money set aside on the Council's balance sheet. The Council has 'general reserves', and 'earmarked reserves' which are set aside for a specific purpose.

Scheme of Delegation

The Scheme of Delegation sets out how the Council and the Executive have delegated authority to a committee or another body, or to an individual Member or officer to exercise their powers or perform their functions. The Officer Scheme of Delegation concerns those powers and functions delegated to officers. The Scheme of Delegation will also specify any limits on the delegated authority.

Section 151 Officer (S151 Officer)

See Chief Finance Officer.

Standards Complaint

Refers to a complaint made against an elected or co-opted councillor, or Town or Parish councillor, that the councillor concerned has failed to comply with the relevant Councillor Code of Conduct.

Statement of Accounts

A document required by law which sets out the Council's financial position at 31 March each year and includes the Council's income and expenditure for a given financial year.

Statute

An Act of Parliament – the law.

Statutory

Required by law. Councils have statutory duties including preventing homelessness, managing community safety, and determining planning applications.

Statutory Officers

The Council is required by law to appoint officers in certain key roles. The Statutory Officers are the Head of Paid Service; the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer. The Council must also appoint other officers including a Director for Children's Services, a Director for Adult Social Services, a Director of Public Health, and a Scrutiny Officer.

Sub-Committee

A group of elected Members from the committee in question convened to undertake a particular task or perform a particular function. The sub-committee then reports back and is accountable to the committee.

Suppliers

Also known as contractors, suppliers are those parties which enter into a contract with the Council to provide goods or services.

Trading Account

Services which are funded by generating income from internal and external sources.

Treasury Management Strategy

The way in which the Council manages its cash, borrowing, lending and investments, and associated risks.

Virement

The movement of money from one budget heading to another. Vires (intra vires / ultra vires) A Latin phrase which means 'powers'. Within the Council, vires concerns the power or lawful authority to make a decision, perform a function or undertake an action. A decision made, function performed, or action undertaken will be 'intra vires' if the Council has the power and lawful authority to do it and 'ultra vires' if it does not.

Ward

A ward is an electoral area. North Northamptonshire Council has 26 wards.

End of Glossary

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