

## Spokes meetings – Role and Purpose

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The primary purpose of Spokes meetings is to ensure that the Policy and Service Spokes are briefed on any key issues relating to the service area, in particular, on items which it is anticipated will be discussed at a future meeting of the committee.
- 1.2. Spokes meetings are not decision-making meetings but the aim is that, as far as practicable, they will provide an opportunity for officers to have a preliminary discussion with Members on key issues affecting the service area and for an exchange of views to take place between the political groups.
- 1.3. A success measure for such meetings will be that:
  - Members are not confronted with significant items at committee meetings for the first time without having been briefed via the Spokes meetings;
  - That Spokes provide information back into the political Group structures so that there is general awareness of key themes for committee and future issues for decision making (confidentiality permitting); and
  - There is a general awareness of any concerns that a political group has on any issue coming before the committee in advance of the committee meeting.
- 1.4 Spokes meetings will be led and chaired by the relevant Executive Director.

### 2. Frequency and Timing

- 2.1. The Spokes meeting shall normally be scheduled on a monthly or six weekly basis and at a time agreed with the Spokes either virtually or in person.
- 2.2. The relevant Executive Director may cancel a meeting where there is insufficient business following consultation with all Spokes first.

### 3. Attendance

- 3.1. The Spokes meeting shall normally be attended by the Chair, Vice-Chair, together with the Spokes appointed by each political group, the relevant Executive Director and other officers as required by the business under consideration. The Joint Administration Spokes (the Chair and Vice-Chair are the spokes for their groups) and Conservative Spoke meetings will be held separately unless it is the wish of all Spokes to meet together.
- 3.2. In the event that a Spokes is unable to attend a particular meeting, they shall appoint a substitute member from their group to attend in their absence.

- 3.3 If Spokes agree to invite an officer who supports or reports to another Policy and Service Committee to their committee meeting to respond to questions, the Chair of the committee making the request will instruct the relevant Democratic Services Officer to notify the Chair of the relevant committee.

#### 4. Agenda and Meeting Papers

- 4.1. An agenda shall be prepared for each meeting and shall be circulated, together with any supporting papers, as early as possible before the meeting in order to allow Spokes sufficient time properly to review the papers and to consult with their Groups as necessary. Papers will not normally be circulated less than five working days before a meeting.

#### 5. Spokes Meeting

- 5.1. It is anticipated that the Spokes meeting will: -

1. Provide an opportunity for a general update on issues affecting the service area which may not necessarily come forward to committee but may be politically sensitive or be of significant public interest (eg: staffing, budgets or performance issues, service pressures etc.).
2. Provide an update on any key external issues affecting service areas (eg: impact of changes in Government Policy etc.).
3. Provide an update on key corporate issues affecting the service area.
4. Provide an update on progress on any key projects of a commercial nature to enable continued Member oversight and engagement with the development of major projects.
5. Provide an opportunity for Spokes to exchange views and provide any initial group views, pending further discussions with groups.
6. Advise Spokes of any significant decisions taken under delegated powers.
7. Consider training needs of members of the committee and review the Committee Training Plan.
8. Review at each meeting the agenda plan for the Policy and Service Committee including the items scheduled for forthcoming meetings and whether, in the interests of agenda management, it is necessary to re-schedule any items.
9. Provide an opportunity to update Spokes on forthcoming items scheduled for committee meetings, including summary reports outlining issues to be considered so that Spokes can feedback to officers on any additional information or changes required to the final report.

10. Consider any member requests for items to be included on a future agenda [Section 7 - Agenda Items Requested by Councillors](#) of Constitution.

## 6. Action Notes

- 6.1. Brief action notes will be prepared by an officer of the relevant Directorate following each Spokes meeting and circulated to Spokes and relevant officers.

## 7. Communication of Issues discussed at Spokes

- 7.1. Spokes are expected to act as a communications channel taking group views to Spokes meetings and reporting back to the group information from, and discussions at, those meetings.
- 7.2. Spokes should be briefed on proposals in sufficient time to enable them to consult with their group members.

## 8. Confidentiality

- 8.1. Spokes must comply with the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct – Guidance on Confidentiality as set out in Part 5.1(a) of the Constitution [\[Constitution\]](#) in handling information submitted to, or discussed at, meetings of Spokes. Therefore, Spokes must not disclose such information to the public, other organisations and public bodies. They may disclose confidential or exempt information to other Cambridgeshire County Council elected members within their political groups, unless the relevant Executive Director or other officer indicates either within the report, or verbally at the meeting, that the matter is of such sensitivity that it may not be disclosed outside the Spokes meeting.

*[Note - Councillors have a wider, common law, right of access to information not otherwise available to the public, referred to as the "need to know" principle. A Councillor has a right to request information where he or she can show a need to know that information in order to perform his or her duties as a Councillor. In many instances, that "need to know" is presumed by officers in making information available to Spokes, in order to enable them to carry out their roles. On occasion, however, the Executive Director or other officer may indicate that, in view of the nature of the information it may not be appropriate to disclose the information beyond the Spokes.]*

- 8.2 In cases of doubt, the Member must seek advice from the Monitoring Officer on the disclosure of confidential or exempt information in advance of the information being disclosed.

## 9. Application to Policy and Service Committees

- 9.1. This guidance shall apply to meetings of Policy and Services Committees (Adults and Health, Assets and Procurement, Children and Young People, Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion, Environment and Green Investment, Highways and Transport, and Strategy, Resources and

Performance). Whilst arrangements for meetings may vary according to individual preferences and circumstances of committees, the key principles within this guidance should be adhered to.