

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT**

To: CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: GUIDE TO MEMBERS' SERVICES
From: HEAD OF CENTRAL SERVICES		
Date: 3 January 2008	Ref: JAF/IL	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The report submits, for consideration by the Committee, an updated Guide to Members' Services.

2. Background

2.1 The Council, through the General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 8 May 2002, approved a Guide to Members' Services and, at its meeting on 14 January 2004, approved an updated version of that Guide.

2.2 In the period since 2004 there have been significant changes including the establishment of multi-member wards, changes to the services and equipment provided to members of the Council and a number of developments ancillary to the principal alterations to Councillors' remuneration, including the requirement to record training and development and alterations in certain allowances – and the opportunity has now been taken to further update the Guide to Members' Services to take account of those changes.

3. Revised Guide

3.1 Attached, as the appendix to this report, is the revised Guide to Members' Services.

4. Recommendation

4.1 It is recommended that the Committee give consideration to the revised Guide to Members' Services as set out in the appendix to this report with a view to recommending its approval to the Council.

J. A. Fleming
Head of Central Services

Members seeking further information on the contents of this report are asked to contact John Fleming, Head of Central Services on Extension 2228.

GUIDE TO MEMBERS' SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Guide

This has been produced by the Members' Services team as a guide to the facilities and services available to the Elected Members of North Lanarkshire Council.

2. ACCOMMODATION

2.1 The Council provides accommodation for Elected Members within the Civic Centre, Motherwell. The accommodation consists of

- *The Civic Suite*

The Civic Suite, which is located on the ground floor of the Civic Centre, comprises the offices of the Provost, the Leader of the Council, the Depute Provost, and the Depute Leader of the Council together with accommodation for the Secretary/Personal Assistant to the Leader of the Council, the Secretary to the Provost, two meeting rooms and one interview room with waiting area.

- *Conveners' and Business Manager's Accommodation*

The Conveners' and Business Manager's accommodation, which consists of an individual office for the Business Manager and for the Convener of each of the council's committees, the Licensing Board and the Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Panels, is located on the fifth floor of the Civic Centre.

- *Majority and Minority Group Accommodation and Accommodation for Non-aligned Members*

The accommodation for the remaining Members of the Majority Group, for the Members of the Minority Group and for the non-aligned Members is located on the fourth floor of the Civic Centre. Within that accommodation, which includes a separate office for the Leader of the Minority Group, there is located an individual work station area for each of these Members of the Council.

- *Members' Library*

The Members' Library is located on the fourth floor of the Civic Centre. Facilities within the library include current newspapers; a range of periodicals; and items deposited in the library for inspection by Members of the Council. The Members' Library is open during normal working hours.

In addition, either individually or through the Members' Library, Members have access to the information service provided by Learning and Leisure Services within Motherwell Library which is open at the following times:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9.00 a.m. - 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 9.00 a.m. - 12.00 noon.

Saturday 9.00 a.m. - 4.00pm.

Access to that service can be gained through the Intranet or by telephone at 01698 332628/332629 and by Fax at 01698 332625.

- *Members' Lounge*

The Members' Lounge is located on the fifth floor of the Civic Centre and is available for use by Members and their guests.

Within the Members' Lounge, facilities include the availability of refreshments in the form of tea, coffee and chilled water, a television, a video, and a regular supply of local and daily newspapers.

- *Meeting Accommodation - 5th Floor*

There are two meeting rooms to the rear of the Members' Lounge on the 5th floor for use by Elected Members. Any Elected Members wishing to use these facilities should contact a member of the team who will arrange to book the accommodation for them.

- *Meeting Accommodation - 4th Floor*

There is a meeting room situated on the 4th floor for use by Elected Members. Any Elected Members wishing to use this facility should contact a member of the team who will arrange to book the accommodation for them.

- *Meeting Accommodation - Committee Rooms and Civic Suite*

The meeting accommodation for meetings of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees is located on the first floor of the Civic Centre and consists of the Council Chamber, attendant waiting area and four committee rooms, one of which is equipped for video conferencing. This accommodation is provided principally for use in connection with meetings of the Council, its Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups. The Council does, however, recognise the existence of political groups of Elected Members and will endeavour to assist in making arrangements, where required, for political group meetings subject, of course, to the requirement of rooms for meetings of Committees, Sub-Committees etc.

An accommodation diary is held by the Committee Services Section of Corporate Services and requests for bookings of committee room accommodation should be passed, together with appropriate details (date of meeting, time, number of persons attending and purpose of meeting), to the Committee Services staff who may be contacted by telephone on 01698 302702.

Within the Civic Suite on the ground floor there are two meeting rooms which are primarily for the use of the Provost, Depute Provost, Leader and Depute Leader of the Council. Depending on availability, these meeting rooms may be available for use for meetings. Booking enquiries may be made with the Committee Services Section on 01698 302702.

3. SECURITY

- 3.1 The Civic Centre is covered by a security system which includes electronically locked doors which can be accessed only by authorised persons. Each Member of the Council has been issued with an identity pass which includes a swipe facility affording access to the Civic Centre accommodation and the Members' car parking area. Any Member who forgets or loses his or her card should make immediate contact with the Members' Services Manager who will arrange for a temporary replacement card to be issued and, if appropriate, will arrange for a lost card to be removed from the system and a new card to be issued. If a card is lost, it is very important that this fact be reported immediately: any person in possession of an active security card allocated to an Elected Member will have extensive access to the Civic Centre.

4. MEMBERS' CAR PARKING

- 4.1 The area most closely adjacent to the Civic Centre, with the exception of two parking spaces set aside for disabled parking, is reserved for Members' parking. The disabled parking spaces are clearly designated, and the continued co-operation of Members is requested in ensuring that those spaces are available for the use of persons with mobility impairments and are not used by any person without mobility impairment.
- 4.2 Access to the area restricted for Members' parking can be gained only by authorised persons and is normally by means of a security swipe card. If, however, any Member does not have that card immediately available, access can be gained by means of the voice link at the entry to the car park following which security staff will arrange access.

5. VISITORS

- 5.1 Access to accommodation within the Civic Centre is restricted to authorised persons. All visitors who do not hold the necessary authorisation require to report to Reception at the main entrance. In the event of a visitor reporting to Reception with a view to meeting with an Elected Member, Reception staff will telephone the Members' Services staff who will be able to confirm whether the Elected Member is available. If it is the case that the Member is not available, Reception staff will explain that the Member is not present and will give the visitor surgery details. If it appears that the matter is of an urgent nature, Members' Services staff will be contacted to take a message which will be forwarded to the Elected Member concerned.
- 5.2 Interview accommodation on the ground floor is available for use by Elected Members. Alternatively, a Member may wish to meet with a visitor within the allocated Member's accommodation. Subject to the operational requirements of the Council's headquarters - which may, from time to time, require the Executive

Director of Corporate Services to restrict access by visitors - a visitor will be admitted at the request of an Elected Member. In such cases, Members' Services staff are available to escort the visitor to the Members' accommodation, although the Member making the request is responsible for the conduct of each visitor so admitted and requires to ensure that each such visitor is escorted at all times while within the Civic Centre. It is, unfortunately, the case that the lifts within the Civic Centre do not constitute means of emergency evacuation from the building. Accordingly any meeting with a visitor who is unable to evacuate the building by means of stairs should take place within the accommodation on the ground floor unless specific arrangements have been made to secure evacuation from an upper floor.

6. FIRE EVACUATION

- 6.1 In the event of fire or other emergency, a fire alarm will sound, in which event all accommodation within the Civic Centre requires to be vacated immediately by means of the clearly marked fire exits.
- 6.2 The fire evacuation procedures require members of staff to physically inspect all areas of the building and report their complete evacuation. Any delay in evacuating the building could put at risk the members of staff who perform this essential duty. It is, accordingly, essential that, on the sounding of the fire alarm, Members vacate the building without delay.
- 6.3 Similarly, as evacuation procedures outwith normal working hours are dependent on accurate information as to the occupants of the building, Members present in the building at weekends and public holidays and between the hours of 18.00 and 08.00 on weekdays require to advise the Security Officer on duty (Ext. 2301).

7. EQUIPMENT

7.1 Work Stations

Each Member is provided with an individual work station.

7.2 Telephones

There is allocated to each Member an individual telephone within the Civic Centre. That telephone includes the facility to divert calls to Members' Services staff either immediately or, if not answered, within six rings.

There has, also, been allocated to each Member a mobile telephone for which the Council pays the rental and the cost of calls in connection with Council business. Any faults or problems with the mobile telephone should be reported to the Members' Services Manager who will make the necessary arrangements for repair or replacement as appropriate.

In addition, the Council will reimburse Members 50% of the base line rental for a domestic telephone plus the full cost of business calls identified by the individual member. Alternatively, the cost of a second line solely for business purposes will be fully reimbursed by the Council. The Council will also reimburse the cost of telephone installation if an Elected Member does not otherwise have one.

Domestic telephone bills should be submitted to the Executive Director of Finance and Customer Services.

A combined telephone answering machine will be issued to each Elected Member on request for home use. Any fault with a telephone answering machine should be reported, in the first instance to the Members' Services Manager who will arrange for repair or replacement as appropriate.

7.3 Mobile Computing

Consideration is currently being given to a range of Mobile Access Devices.

7.4 Photocopying

Photocopiers are located on the fourth, fifth and ground floors. Those machines can be used on a self-service basis *for council business*. Alternatively Members may leave with staff original documents for photocopying, in which event the requested number of copies will be taken and returned to the Member as soon as possible.

Should Members have more extensive copying requests than can cost-effectively be dealt with on those photocopiers (more than 20 copies) those should, on cost grounds, be referred in the first instance to the Members' Services Manager who will liaise with the print room staff to have the work done.

If copying articles from newspapers, books, magazines, etc, please refer to the terms and conditions prescribed by the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, a copy of which is displayed by each photocopier.

7.5 Shredders

There is a shredding machine located in the Member's Library on the 4th floor to dispose of confidential material. This machine can be used by Elected Members and will be operated by Members' Services staff on request.

8. SERVICES

8.1 The Members' Services staff are a dedicated team available to provide services to Elected Members.

8.2 A full secretarial service is provided to the Leader and Depute Leader of the Council by the Secretary/Personal Assistant to the Leader of the Council. Similarly, a full secretarial service is provided to the Provost and Depute Provost by the Secretary to the Provost. Both the Secretary/Personal Assistant to the Leader of the Council and the Secretary to the Provost are based on the ground floor in the Civic Suite.

8.3 Word processing/clerical support services for Conveners and the Business Manager are provided by the staff based on the fifth floor of the Civic Centre. For other Elected Members these support services are provided by the staff located on the fourth floor of the Civic Centre.

- 8.4 There is 24-hour access to a digital dictation system, Winscribe. This is accessed from any telephone - internal, external or mobile - by way of a unique code for each Elected Member. Instructions on how to use the system are available from Members' Services staff.
- 8.5 We recently participated in a pilot study of a caseload management system which enables Elected Members to manage, in a structured manner, issues and concerns raised by their constituents. Further consideration is being given to a variety of caseload management systems.
- 8.6 The Members' Services Manager is available to ensure that all typing/word processing work for Elected Members is completed expeditiously.

9. PUBLIC MEETINGS AND MAIL MERGES

From time to time Elected Members may be asked by constituents to hold a public meeting regarding a particular local issue or issues: similarly an elected member may wish to write to a number of constituents regarding a particular issue. As the necessary expenditure can be authorised only by the Council, a committee of the council or an officer with delegated powers, the elected member should, in the first instance, contact the Members' Services Manager who will liaise with officers of the relevant Service to seek the necessary support and guidance.

10. PETITIONS

From time to time Elected Members may receive petitions from constituents. These should be passed to the Executive Director of Corporate Services who will report to the relevant committee on the matter.

11. INCOMING MAIL

- 11.1 All incoming mail addressed to a particular councillor is delivered, in the first instance, to the mail room on the ground floor of the Civic Centre. Each morning the mail for Elected Members is delivered to the Members' Services Team prior to 9.30am. Mail for the Leader, Depute Leader, Provost and Depute Provost is hand delivered to the appropriate office. All other mail is placed in the pigeon hole for the relevant Elected Member - the pigeon hole for each Elected Member is located on the fourth floor. The process of mail sorting and delivery is normally completed by 10.00am. The afternoon post is delivered by the mail room staff at 12.00 noon and is distributed in the same way.
- 11.2 To avoid the possibility of loss of mail and unnecessary mail costs, Members are asked to remove their mail from the pigeon holes as soon as is convenient. Any mail remaining in a Member's pigeon hole will be delivered to the Member by courier to the Member's home address along with Council agendas, unless there is no scheduled courier delivery - in which event it will be sent by post - or unless there is a specific request from a Member not to deliver mail in this way.

12. OUTGOING MAIL

- 12.1 Outgoing mail relating to Council business should be placed in the appropriate trays on the fourth and fifth floors. A team member will uplift that mail and deliver it to the mail room for despatch. The mail room deadlines are as follows

<i>Monday to Thursday</i>	<i>4.30 p.m.</i>
<i>Friday</i>	<i>4.00 p.m.</i>

Any special mail (recorded or special post) which has to be despatched on the same day has the undernoted deadlines

Monday to Friday	3.45 p.m.
------------------	-----------

13. MAIL FROM ELECTED MEMBERS TO SERVICES

- 13.1 Elected Members will, from time to time, require to write to Council services to seek information or explanations on matters which are within the responsibility of a specific service. As a general rule it is appropriate for such correspondence to be addressed to the relevant Head of Service. This arrangement should ensure that an appropriate reply is sent and that the information given reflects the up to date corporate knowledge and understanding of the service.

14. MEMBERS' SURGERIES

- 14.1 Arrangements are made by the Members' Services team to book accommodation for surgeries and to advertise surgeries.
- 14.2 Any alteration or cancellation to surgery arrangements should be advised to staff as quickly as possible in order that a public notice can be placed or cancelled as appropriate. A pro forma designed for this purpose is available from Members' Services staff.
- 14.3 Should a Member experience any problem outwith normal working hours in respect of accommodation for surgeries held in community centres, contact should be made with the appropriate officer of Environmental Services by contacting 01698 506280. or 07939 280252 In the event of any Member experiencing any other difficulty with surgery arrangements, he or she is asked to contact, in the first instance, the Members' Services Manager who will liaise with appropriate officers to resolve the situation.
- 14.4 On request, each month Elected Members can receive six copies of their surgery poster for display at the surgery venues.
- 14.5 Members' enquiry form books are available from Members' Services staff. These books are designed to assist Members in keeping records of surgery enquiries.

15. I.T. EQUIPMENT

15.1 There is allocated to each Member, located at his or her work station in the Civic Centre, a PC with access to the following facilities

E-mail
MARS (Minutes, Agendas, Reports System)
COINS (Councillor Information System)
Printing
Internet
Intranet
Word
Excel
Powerpoint
Access

15.2 IT equipment can be supplied for home working, providing access to Civic Centre systems. The objectives are to

- mirror as closely as possible the Civic Centre desktop
- provide adequate training and support to Members
- develop effective fault reporting procedures

Any Elected Member wishing to participate in this should contact the Members' Services Manager.

15.3 Home based IT equipment is linked to a Citrix metaframe. A key benefit of the Citrix metaframe is centralised server based management which

- provides Members with access to the same applications and information as is available in the Civic Centre
- secures corporate information
- avoids the need for local back up of data
- minimises software licence costs
- minimises support costs and downtime
- ensures essential anti-virus functions are centrally maintained
- provides rapid scalability
- is secure, reliable and cost effective

15.4 Elected Members are encouraged to undertake IT Training and Development opportunities to maximise the benefits of the technology available. Contact should be made with the Members' Services Manager.

15.5 All IT faults/requests for assistance should be reported in the first instance to a member of the Members Services team who will ensure the fault is logged with the IT Service Desk and allocated a reference number. IT Services will rectify the situation as quickly as possible. Many faults can be rectified remotely, however there will be occasions when a home visit is required. In these circumstances Elected Members will be requested to make arrangements to be present to ensure the fault is rectified.

16. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

There is a range of training and development opportunities designed to assist Elected Members of North Lanarkshire Council to undertake their duties.

16.1 Induction

Following Local Government Elections, induction training is held which comprises of a programme delivered by the Chief Executive and Executive Directors. To date, feedback from Members has been very positive. While this programme is designed to assist new Members, existing Members are also invited - this has been particularly useful when services have restructured or have developed or changed.

16.2 Members Training Programme

This annual programme has been run since 2000/01.

The programme has been designed, following consultation with Elected Members, to meet identified training needs and is delivered on a fixed calendar of dates. For ease of reference, the dates are included in the Council Diary.

Members are consulted on the contents of the Programme and encouraged to give their views on the content with a view to continuous improvement.

16.3 IT Training

Within Corporate Services there is an IT Training Room which is available for use by Members. A range of IT Training courses have been developed for Elected Members and Officers of the Council.

It is recognised that Elected Members have many demands on their time and that their attendance at scheduled courses can be difficult. To alleviate this, training sessions can be accommodated outwith normal working hours by prior arrangement.

In addition, e-learning modules for Diversity, Data Protection and Best Value can be undertaken from the desk top at a time and pace to suit the user.

16.4 European Computer Driving Licence

Members interested in achieving external accreditation for their IT Skills may be interested to note that the IT Training Room is an approved testing centre for European Computer Driving Licence.

To obtain the European Computer Driving Licence 7 units have to be undertaken:

- Basic IT Concepts
- Managing Files
- Word Processing
- Spreadsheets
- Database
- Presentations
- Internet and Email

There is also an ECDL advanced certificate available which consists of 4 independent units:

- Advanced Word
- Advanced Access
- Advanced Excel
- Advanced PowerPoint

16.5 Further Education

Provision has been made for Members to apply for financial assistance to undertake further education related to their ability to carry out their Council duties. Members interested should complete and return the appropriate application form to the Executive Director of Corporate Services.

16.6 Conferences/Seminars

Members also have the opportunity to attend relevant Conferences/Seminars as approved by Service Committees.

16.7 Record of Training and Development

There has been issued by the Scottish Executive Finance and Central Services Department, interim guidance on councillors' remuneration and training. Paragraphs 19 and 20 of that guidance are in the following terms

"19. Each councillor should, within a reasonable timescale after being elected:

- have a role description in a format determined by the Council;
- have participated in a training needs assessment;
- have a personal development plan.

20. It is envisaged that Councils should develop their own training and development packages to suit their needs rather than rely on a generic format. Training is seen as vitally important given the fundamental changes which will come into effect from 3 May and should be ongoing for all councillors based on their individual development needs. Councils will wish to ensure that sufficient mechanisms are in place to allow councillors to take these opportunities."

The guidance goes on to deal with publication of training. Paragraph 21 states

“21. At the same time as Councils publish information councillors’ expenses on their website, they will be expected to publish details of any training undertaken by councillors in the previous year. This does not mean that a councillor’s personal development plan should be published. As a minimum it is suggested that a reference to the number of councillors undertaking training and the various training courses/conferences attended should be included as a footnote.”

A personal development plan template has been approved by the Council, an introduction to personal development planning was included on the Induction Programme for new members and Personal Development Plan Workshops for elected members are to be arranged.

A database has been established for Elected Members' training and development. To ensure that the database is up-to-date, any Member who has attended a seminar or conference is requested as soon as possible to advise the Members' Services Manager of his or her participation in the event.

17 CIVIC ARRANGEMENTS

17.1 Civic Functions

All matters relating to civic hospitality and civic receptions are determined, on behalf of the Council, by the Civic Functions Group which is a Sub-Committee of the Corporate Services Committee and is chaired by the Provost.

Invitations to attend civic functions are issued in the name of the Provost and are normally issued to Elected Members on a rota basis. If, however, an Elected Member has a special interest in any event, this should be made known, in the first instance, to the Members' Services Manager in order that the Provost may be advised.

17.2 Civic Transport

Two vehicles are held for use by the Provost, the Depute Provost, the Leader of the Council and the Depute Leader of the Council and, at the discretion of the Provost, by other senior Members of the Council in their representation of the Council in the undertaking of formal civic duties. In the event of formal civic duties requiring more than one vehicle, additional transport will be provided either through liaison with the Environmental Services or through the use of taxis. Any Member requesting use of civic transport should contact the Council Officer.

17.3 Civic Gifts

Civic gifts are presented by the Provost on behalf of the Council and a small stock of civic gifts is maintained. Any Member who wishes consideration to be given to the presentation of a civic gift is asked to pass full details to the Members' Services Manager in order that the Provost may give consideration as to whether a gift is

appropriate, the nature of the gift and whether the gift should be presented by the Provost in person or, on behalf of the Provost, by another Member of the Council.

18 THE ETHICAL STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE ETC. (SCOTLAND) ACT 2000 AND USE OF COUNCIL FACILITIES

18.1 The Councillors' Code of Conduct

Scottish Ministers have issued the Councillors' Code of Conduct, under the Ethical Standards in Public Life, etc. (Scotland) Act 2000. Councillors are required to comply with this Code in carrying out their public duties.

Elected Members are recommended to familiarise themselves with the requirements of the Code and to consult it as the need arises.

18.2 Facilities and Services

The facilities provided – and the services of the Members' Services Team – are so provided to assist Councillors in carrying out their duties as Elected Members of the Council and for no other purpose. Councillors are reminded of the provisions of the Councillors' Code of Conduct under the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 and, in particular, of the following provisions:-

“3.2 You must respect all Council employees and the role that they play, and treat them with courtesy at all times. It is expected that employees will show the same consideration in return”.

“3.17 The Council will normally provide facilities to assist Councillors in carrying out their duties as Councillors or as holders of a particular office within the Council. This may involve access to secretarial assistance, stationery and equipment such as telephones, fax machines and computers. Such facilities must only be used in carrying out Council duties and must never be used for party political or campaigning activities. Where the Council recognises party political groups, assistance to such groups is appropriate in relation to Council matters but must not extend to political parties more generally and you should be aware of and ensure the Council complies with the statutory rules governing local authority publicity”.

18.3 The Standards Commission

One of the principal features of the Act is that the Code of Conduct for Councillors is enforceable through the Standards Commission for Scotland.

The Standards Commission has responsibility for giving guidance to local authorities about the Code and for dealing with complaints that a Councillor may have breached the Code. If the Standards Commission finds that a Councillor has breached the Code, sanctions may be imposed ranging from a formal censure of the Councillor concerned to disqualification from office for up to five years.

18.4 Members' Registerable Interests

The Register of Members' Interests consists of entries made by each Councillor of interests which require to be registered under the legislation. If the information which is contained in the Register changes, then that change must be notified to the Executive Director of Corporate Services within one month.

Similarly, it is a statutory requirement that each member of the Council records with the Executive Director of Corporate Services the details of any gifts or hospitality he or she receives and this record is available for public inspection as part of the Register of Members' Interests.

The Register is available for inspection in main council offices and public libraries. The electronic version of the Register is available via COINS (Councillor Information System) on the Council's web site. It displays the most recent notice given by each Councillor which forms part of the Register. If, however, any Member considers that the publication of his or her personal address in the electronic version of the Register might compromise personal security, the Executive Director of Corporate Services should be advised and arrangements will be made to adjust the electronic version of the Register accordingly. Full details of personal addresses will, however, still be available on the hard copies of the Register available for public inspection.

19. GENERAL

19.1 Further Information

Any Member seeking further information should, in the first instance, contact the Members' Services Manager.

19.2 Feedback

The comments of Elected Members on the contents of this Guide would be welcomed as would any suggestions for additions or improvements.