

ADVICE NOTE: The Chairman's Role

A Chairman is elected annually by the members of the council at the annual meeting of the council.¹ Unless he resigns or becomes disqualified, the Chairman continues in office until his successor becomes entitled to act as chairman at the next annual meeting of the council.²

The Chairman's main role is to run council meetings. He or she can suggest the content and design of the agenda, but as legal signatory, technically the Clerk has the final say. The Chairman is responsible for ensuring that effective and lawful decisions are taken at meetings of the council and, assisted by the clerk, guides activities by managing the meetings of the council. The Chairman is responsible for involving all councillors in discussion and ensuring that councillors keep to the point. The Chairman summarises the debate and facilitates the making of clear resolutions and is responsible for keeping discussions moving so that the meeting is not too long. The Chairman has a casting vote. His/her first vote is a personal vote as a member of the council. If there is a tied vote, the Chairman can have a second or casting vote.

The Chairman has the power to call an extraordinary meeting of the council at any time.³

The Chairman will often be the public face of the council and will represent the council at official events. He/she may be asked to speak on behalf of the council and, in such circumstances, should only express the agreed views of the council and not give his or her personal views.

The Chairman cannot legally make a decision on behalf of the council.

¹ Local Government Act, section 15(1) (England); section 34(1) (Wales)

² Local Government Act, section 15(4) (England); section 34(4) (Wales)

³ Local Government Act, Schedule 12, para 9(1) (England), para 25(1) (Wales)