

Role of Opposition Spokesperson

A Group Spokesperson is a position that is held by an opposition member in relation to each Service Committee. The overall role is to provide an effective political counter-balance to the role of the Committee Chair and ensure each decision is appropriately considered by each Service Committee.

1. The role of the spokesperson is to champion the principles of open, timely efficient and affordable decision making in accordance with legal obligations and the needs of the residents of Cheshire East.
2. Given that the Council's Administration groups hold the chairs and vice chairs of service committees, the Opposition Spokesperson's role is to champion the benefits and necessity of internal scrutiny, and to be a conduit of information from the committee to the main opposition group.
3. A spokesperson will be expected to:
 - a. To support the democratic process by ensuring that, in their roles as committee members, the activities of the political administration are scrutinised, and where necessary challenged.

b. To work in cooperation with the Committee Chair and Vice Chair to facilitate the efficient and timely conduct of the committee business **subject to fulfilling the role as described in (a) and (e).**

Add the additional text (in red) at the end of bullet point (b).

REASON: Opposition Spokespersons have a pivotal role in holding the administration to account as described in (a). Whilst in (b) efficiency and timeliness is desirable, it must not be at the expense of appropriate debate, challenge or time to present alternative options (see (e)).

- c. To inform, discuss and where appropriate agree with the Chair and Vice Chair an approach to contentious issues which support the principles of openness, timely and efficient decision making which meets the needs of the residents of Cheshire East
 - d. To work with the Chair and Vice Chair to provide recommendations for training, development, and improved learning for all committee members.
 - e. Champion the effective scrutiny of the **committee's** decisions and to support the democratic process by ensuring that the activities of the administration are examined, tested and, where appropriate, to promote consideration of alternative options.

~~f. To ensure that committee decisions and administration **align** with and **reflect** the **policy**, budgetary **and** constitutional and policy framework of the Council.~~

Remove this bullet point (f)

REASON: Section (f) is ambiguous, suggesting that the Opposition Spokesperson must support administration-led policy decisions, that may create a conflict of interest where members may have voted against these in previous forums.

In the context of previous bullet points, where it is already acknowledged that the role is required to support the democratic process, section (f) is unnecessary and should therefore be deleted.

- g. To contribute to policy development and the operational role of the committee, from the perspective of non-administration groups
- h. To meet regularly with senior officers and receive briefings on the work programme of the committee and share information with Councillors from opposition Groups. This will enable them to make evidence-based interventions, where appropriate, at the committee meeting itself, which would add to the quality of the debate and ensure effective self-scrutiny.
- i. To be the committee's first political point of contact for non-Administration Councillors
- j. To establish and maintain effective working relationships with Chief Officers, Heads of Service and other key officers.

k. To support key officers in the delivery of reports to the committee which meet the needs of Councillors to make informed decisions.

Bullet point (k) is ambiguous. Opposition Spokespersons do not attend Chair and Vice-Chair meetings with officers and do not see Officer Reports prior to publication. Whilst the introduction of regular meetings with senior officers may provide an opportunity to 'influence' how reports are presented to the committee, this bullet point is not deliverable as currently written.

- l. To champion Cheshire East Council's programme for Brighter Futures, encourage positive behaviour, and challenge inappropriate conduct in the Committee.