

Draft Guidance for Councillors and Members' Support staff (Mayor & Members' Services, Executive Support Office, Political Advisors and Scrutiny PAs) on Reference Letters from Councillors:-

Councillors are on occasion asked to provide character or other references on behalf of a ward resident or other acquaintance.

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for a reference to be supplied as a community service but it is important that procedures are in place to protect the interests of both the Councillor and the Council, particularly in relation to the provisions of the revised Code of Conduct on use of Council resources. The Standards Committee has agreed the following guidance to be followed in the event that a Member is requested to prepare a letter of reference for a constituent or other person:-

- The Councillor is not obliged to supply a reference, which will be provided only at his/her discretion and for someone who is known to the Councillor.
- The letter may be prepared on Council letterhead.
- Officers may type the letter on behalf of the Councillor but the officer details should not be on the letter head.
- The wording of the reference letter must come from the Councillor him/herself. The Member is giving a personal reference, based on their personal knowledge of the individual, not a reference from the Council. Therefore it is not appropriate for an officer to draft the text of the letter.
- As a matter of practice, all letters will include in the body of the text a clause which indicates that 'this is a personal reference and reflects the views of the Councillor. It is not a Council reference'.
- The Councillor must personally sign the reference letter. Officer may not sign or 'pp' the letter on the Councillor's behalf.