Briefing note

Democratic Services Work Experience.

Prepared by	Siobhan Pitkin, Business Support and Civic Events Manager
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Purpose	To brief work experience individuals on what to expect during their placement.

Introduction

Your hours for work experience will usually be 10.00 – 16.00 daily, unless a later start or finish time has been agreed so that you can attend a public meeting at Civic in the evening. You are welcome to request an earlier finish time, but we would recommend no earlier than 15.00 to get the most out of this opportunity. The day will normally be split into two sessions morning 10.00 - 12.30 and afternoon 13.30 - 16.00 allowing for a 60-minute lunch break.

If you have any allergies or medical concerns that we need to be aware of please notify Siobhan.pitkin@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

On your first day you will be met by John Zammit or Siobhan Pitkin who will take you on a walk of the building, show you the facilities, emergency exits and arrange for an ID pass that will permit you access to the building during your placement.

You will receive a laptop for use during your placement, this laptop must not leave the Council Offices and it can be left in an agreed place at the end of each day. You will be required to carry out relevant mandatory (meta compliance) training on the laptop which will cover Council policies such as Data Security, Computer Use Policy, Email, Equalities, and other areas such as Code of Conduct, Freedom of Information etc.

Please ensure that the ID and laptop is left with colleagues on your last placement day.

During your placement you will spend time with each of the four core teams within Democratic services which include Elections, Committees, Councillor Support and Digital Governance.

If your enquiry was made through a political group you will likely spend more time with Political Assistants but will have the opportunity to spend a day or two with Democratic Services.

Councillor Support and Civic Office

This team comprises of four areas which include; councillor support, civic events, EA to the Leader and EA to the Mayor.

- Councillor support covers a range of administrative responsibilities including but not limited to Councillor training, Councillor inductions and general admin support.
- As part of the Mayoral calendar
- The Leader's EA supports the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members with diary and travel arrangements.
- The Mayor's EA supports the Mayor with diary and travel arrangements and Civic Event admin.

Electoral Services

This team plays a crucial role in maintaining a fair and democratic voting process. Our main responsibilities fall under two broad categories of Electoral Registration and Electoral Administration.

Electoral Registration covers:

- Maintaining, publishing, and distributing the Electoral Register
- Processing applications to register to vote, as well as postal and proxy applications, and voter authority certificates
- Conducting the Annual Canvass

Electoral Administration covers:

- Delivering elections and referendums, which includes booking polling stations, recruiting and training staff, and providing all equipment and materials
- Overseeing the verification and counting of votes after the close of poll at an election or referendum
- Providing advice to voters, candidates and agents, and political parties

Committees

This team is responsible for supporting the Council's decision-making processes, we ensure that meetings are properly organised and that decisions are made in accordance with the relevant laws. We:

- Provide administrative support – drafting and publishing agendas, decisions and minutes.
- Manage meetings – ensure meetings are set up and well-run including supporting the Chair, committee members and members of the public.
- Provide advice and uphold democratic principles of decision making – constitutional or procedural advice to committee members, the public or officers.

Digital Governance

This area provides technical support to the rest of Democratic Services and Councillors.

- They ensure that the software responsible for the Electoral Management System (Xpress) and the Committee Management System (Modern.Gov) is up to date and configured as needed.
- Website and other online documents are up to date.
- Freedom of Information requests are processed properly and in time.
- Councillor equipment (laptops etc) work as intended.
- Running of representations and videos etc in meetings work as intended.

Political Assistants

There are three political assistants at Milton Keynes City Council, one per group for Labour, Liberal Democrats and Conservative.