Milton Keynes City Council

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.

What to expect

Your hours for work experience will usually be Monday – Friday, 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.

Please note that it is likely we will host more than one student a week, where possible we will try and ensure that you are of the same/similar study year.

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 Siobhan Pitkin or another nominated contact 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 Office 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.

The weeks schedule

You will be given a schedule for the week. On occasion, the schedule may change last minute if colleagues need to accommodate urgent work. You will have access to MS Teams and Outlook, if you are ever in doubt about your schedule you can contact Siobhan Pitkin or your nominated contact via these programmes.

During your placement you will spend time with each of the three core teams within Democratic services which include Elections, Committees, Councillor Support. You will also have the opportunity to meet the Head of Service and Director of the Service where availability allows.

During the week you will be allocated an independent research task by the Head of Service which you can expect to take half a day, the Head of Service will then review the outcomes of this task with you at the end of the week. This may take the form of a written response and/or discussion.

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 three areas which include; councillor support, civic events and Executive Assistant to the Mayor.

- Councillor support covers a range of administrative responsibilities including but not limited to Councillor training, Councillor inductions, FOIs and general admin support.
- Ensuring Mod.gov is updated with Councillor information
- As part of the Mayoral calendar
- 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.

Political Assistants

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

Legal Team

The Legal team sits under the Law & Governance Directorate alongside Democratic Services. This team oversees, commercial and governance, place, litigation and social care. If time and availability permit you will spend a day/ afternoon with one of the teams.