

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	14 May 2014
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Executive
TITLE OF REPORT	Ministerial Visits Protocol
REPORT NUMBER	OCE/14/017
CHECKLIST RECEIVED	Yes

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report brings before the Council the proposed ministerial visits protocol requested by the Council at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Council reviews the content of the ministerial visits protocol and, subject to any agreed changes to it, approves it for immediate introduction.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The report has no specific financial implications.

### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The proposed protocol is relevant to the way the Council pursues partnership working with the UK and Scottish Governments.

### 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

At its meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014 the Council had before it a report by the Chief Executive relating to correspondence with the Head of the Civil Service (OCE/14/005). The Council resolved:-

- i. To note the correspondence received from the Head of the Civil Service;
- ii. To instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government seeking talks aimed at creating a positive working relationship between Aberdeen City Council and the Scottish Government; and

- iii. To instruct the Chief Executive to report to the next Council meeting with a revised protocol for the organisation of ministerial visits to Council properties which reflects the protocols operated for such visits by both the UK and Scottish Governments.

Attached as Appendix 1 to the report is the proposed ministerial visits protocol. The Council is requested to review the content of the protocol and, subject to any agreed changes to it, approve it for immediate introduction.

## 6. IMPACT

The Council seeks constructive working relationships with the UK and Scottish Governments in order to deliver the Council's policy statement, the Single Outcome Agreement and the business plan. In this context, the aim of the ministerial visits protocol is to provide clarity in the process for arranging and delivering successful and mutually beneficial visits to Council properties.

## 7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Given the high profile nature of ministerial visits, the Council will wish to keep the operation of the protocol under review.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

## 9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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## **Ministerial Visits Protocol**

### *Introduction*

The people of Aberdeen elect representatives to sit on the City Council, in the Scottish Parliament, the Westminster Parliament and the European Parliament. In turn the people of Aberdeen are served by the City Council, the Scottish Government, the UK Government and the institutions of the European Union.

It is recognised that on occasion ministers from the Scottish Government, ministers from the UK Government and representatives from the European Union may wish to make formal visits to City Council venues, properties or events. In general terms such visits are to be welcomed as an opportunity to review and discuss in the City the impact being made on the people of Aberdeen by the policies and related initiatives being pursued by the various bodies.

In addition such visits provide the opportunity to the Council to highlight best practice and to present direct to decision-makers proposals for how changes in policy might improve the services provided to citizens.

It is recognised that Aberdeen's interests are best served by the various bodies working as closely as possible together to align their aspirations for the City and by wherever possible forging an effective partnership in the delivery of policies designed to produce beneficial outcomes for those who live and work in the City.

Inevitably, notwithstanding the above, there will be occasions when the policies pursued or the priorities articulated within programmes of activity do not align and as a result there will be potential for robust exchanges of view during visits as elected representatives seek to persuade the electorate of the benefits to them of particular strategies and actions designed to tackle issues faced by the City.

It is recognised that such debate is inevitable in a democracy and as such the potential for it will be acknowledged as arrangements for any proposed visit are made.

### *Protocol*

Formal, planned visits to City Council venues, properties or events may arise through suggestions or requests made by the offices of Scottish or UK Government ministers, or of European Union representatives. Alternatively, such visits may be sought by the City Council itself. However the proposal arises, formal, planned visits to City Council venues, properties or events will take place at the invitation of the City Council.

All such invitations will be issued by the Chief Executive on behalf of the Council.

Whether a proposal for a visit emerges through discussion direct with the Office of Chief Executive or through liaison with a Council service, the Chief Executive will seek a recommendation from the appropriate Director in relation to the potential visit and its likely impact on the delivery of service at the Council venue or property in question.

The Office of Chief Executive will liaise with relevant officers within the Council and with relevant officials working on behalf of the visiting minister or representative to establish and agree the purpose(s) of the visit and the details of its location, date and time.

The Office of Chief Executive will liaise with relevant officers to ensure briefing material is produced on the subject matter of the proposed visit highlighting the Council's position.

The Chief Executive will liaise with the Council Leader or his representative in his absence, on the proposed visit and the appropriate Council representation to attend the event. Once the representation is agreed, the Office of Chief Executive will inform the relevant members and officers accordingly.

The Office of Chief Executive will inform all elected members and the Extended Corporate Management Team (ECMT) of a forthcoming visit.

Through the Council's media team, the Office of Chief Executive will liaise with relevant media officers working on behalf of the visiting minister or representative to ensure information on the visit is issued to the media as appropriate. Media releases will be shared in advance of them being issued and wherever possible a joint statement will be agreed for release.

#### *Meetings/Civic Events*

For the avoidance of doubt, the above protocol is not intended to be used either in making all necessary arrangements for business meetings between ministers and the Council Leader, the Chief Executive and other City Council representatives or in the issuing of invitations on behalf of the Lord Provost to ministers to attend civic events.

#### *Other visits to the City*

When informed that visits are to be made to the City (i.e. not to a City Council venue or property) by Scottish Government ministers, UK Government ministers or representatives of the European Union the Office of Chief Executive will inform all elected members and the ECMT.

### *Civic Visits*

Given the global reach of Aberdeen and the businesses based in the City, it is acknowledged that the Lord Provost regularly hosts visits from representatives of foreign governments. The arrangements for these visits will continue to be made by the Lord Provost's office.

14.5.14