

8. Member Procedures (d) Councillor Call for Action

Guidance

1. What is a Councillor Call for Action?

Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) is a process for councillor to act on behalf of residents to resolve a local issue of concern, acting as a last resort for people who cannot get issues resolved through any other means. Ward councillors should be looking to identify CCfAs in their community, but CCfAs can also be raised by local people directly with their ward councillors. It will still be up to councillors to recognise whether an issue is a CCfA and whether it is appropriate to champion that issue. You are asked to consider using CCfA as a last resort when all other avenues have been explored.

The decision to raise and champion a CCfA lies with you as the councillor. The CCfA, alongside proposals which will require a much wider range of agencies to formally cooperate with scrutiny in the future, is intended to provide greater emphasis to the work undertaken by you in your community as community advocates and champions, and to further increase the accountability of public service providers to local communities.

To make provision for CCfA is a legal requirement from 1 April 2009 and councillors are under a duty to consider requests from members of the public on certain issues.

2. What's new about the CCfA?

What distinguishes the CCfA from items and topics already raised by councillors for consideration by scrutiny is:

- Any member can raise a CCfA issue for scrutiny to consider.
- The focus of the CCfA is on neighbourhood or locality issues and specifically the quality of public service provision at a locality level.
- The CCfA represents a genuine local community concern (based on local councillors' judgements) and
- It is a persistent problem which the local councillor has been unable to resolve through local action and discussion with relevant services and agencies.

Scrutiny reviews resulting from CCfA will be undertaken by scrutiny committees which will include councillors from the affected locality. There is an expectation that any scrutiny reviews resulting from CCfA on the ward-based scrutiny issues will be 'short and sharp', focused reviews – it is important that the public see

this as a responsive and unbureaucratic process which delivers tangible outcomes.

3. What is expected of you?

Essentially a Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) is a recognition of the work you undertake as a ward councillor in taking up local issues on behalf of your community. You are expected to identify issues of local concern and act with and on behalf of your community to resolve those issues. It is up to you using this guidance to decide:

- Which issues you take forward as CCfAs and champion;
- When an issue should be referred to one or more of the Scrutiny Committees; and
- When to reject an issue.

It is a matter of judgement which requests you agree to “champion”. As a local councillor you are accountable to your local community for these judgements. Championing a request will mean taking the issue up on behalf of the resident(s) concerned and trying to resolve the problem by liaising with council officers, and/or outside agencies.

Councillors deal with issues of concern on behalf of their constituents as an everyday part of their constituency case work. The CCfA is not intended to add additional bureaucracy to these ward councillor requests, which will continue to be dealt with in the same way as they are now. If you are uncertain about whether a request might be appropriate, the Team Leader (Democratic Services) can provide advice and assistance to you and to the member(s) of the public making the request.

4. Checklist for Councillors using a CCfA

Initial consideration and actions

1. Discuss with other ward councillors (check their actions and intentions and whether they can help).
2. Take steps to resolve the issue through existing mechanisms such as contacting Council officers, or liaising with other organisations, or securing consideration of the matter by the County Council, or checking whether it can be fed into an existing or review already being undertaken.
3. If the issue is resolved, inform the resident of the outcome and the steps taken, including any difficulties or learning points.
4. If the issues remain unresolved, consult the Team Leader (Democratic Services) and, if appropriate, formally request that the item be considered by the relevant scrutiny committee.

A flowchart of the CCfA process is provided as Annexe 1 and takes you through each step of the process.

Reject the request for a CCfA if it is any of the following:

1. An individual complaint.
2. An issue relating to an “excluded” matter such as planning or licensing matter or another issue where individuals or entities have a right of appeal (other than a complaint to the Ombudsman).
3. Vexatious, discriminatory or not reasonable.
4. It is being used as a “second bite of the cherry” e.g. where a previous call-in has failed, or a petition has already been considered.

Accept if it is:

1. An issue of genuine local concern; and
2. All other avenues for resolution have been followed, and
3. You believe that this is now the most appropriate way to deal with it.

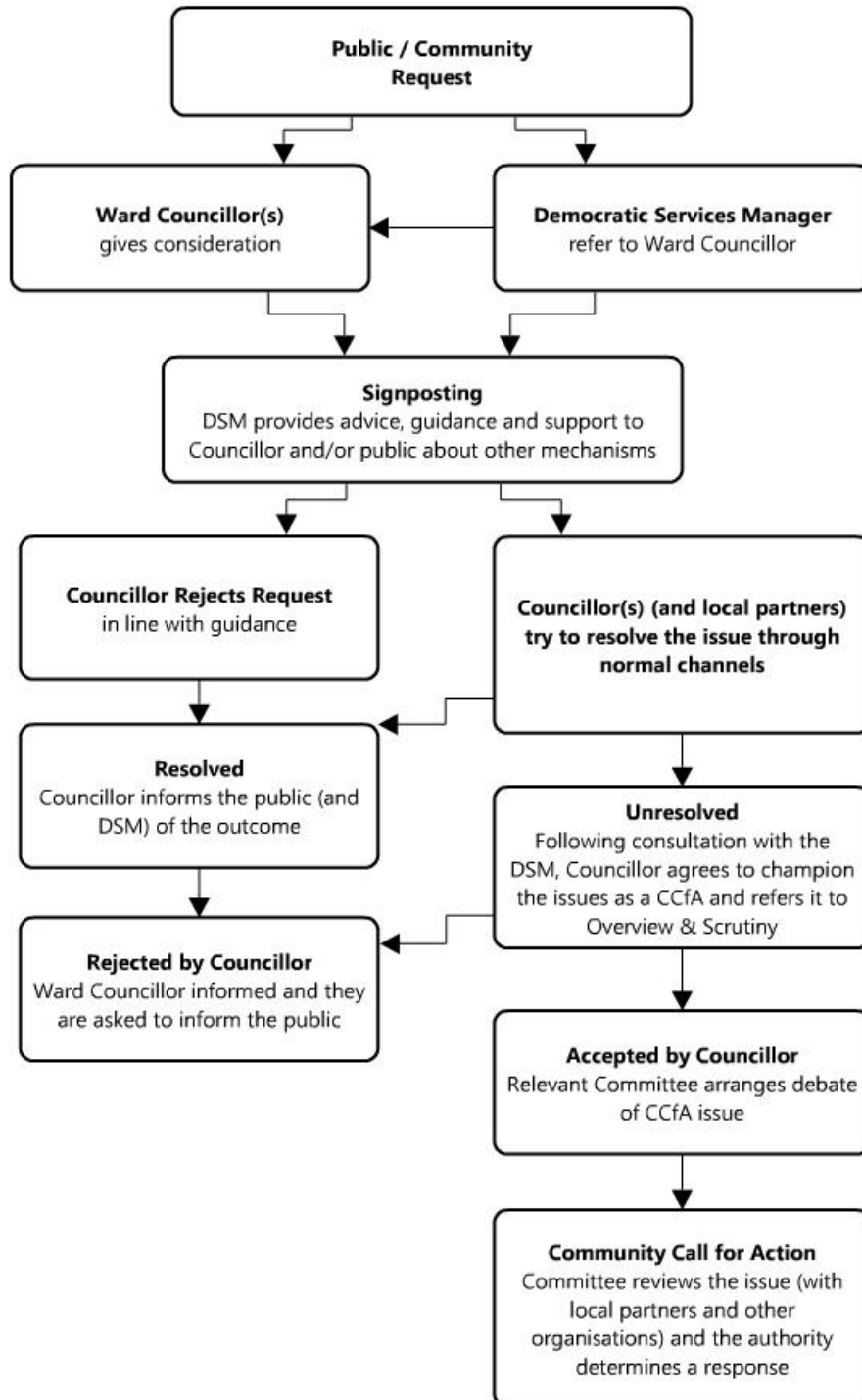
How does CCfA fit with the Scrutiny Work Programme?

Currently members can put an item on the scrutiny committee agendas. These arrangements remain unchanged. The public have the opportunity to suggest topics and reviews through contacting the Democratic Services Team or by contacting their local councillor.

The aim of Scrutiny is to be as strategic as possible, championing issues on behalf of the community so it is possible that a CCfA topic may already be included in a Review Committee work programme.

It is valuable for CCfA issues to feed into the broad scrutiny work programme, and vice versa. The purpose of CCfA is to give members more of a voice, and scrutiny itself is a member-led process. CCfA can sit comfortably alongside existing methods for placing items on the scrutiny work programme. CCfA should make the work programme more relevant and timely.

Councillor Call for Action Flow Chart



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