

Guidance note for Members who are stepping down or retiring

This guidance note is intended to support and advise elected Members who have indicated that they intend to step down or retire from their councillor role.

If you have recently taken this decision, there may be issues you want to consider relating to your ICT data, equipment and email. This guidance note provides information and advice to make the transition as simple as possible. You will also find some general advice provided by councillors who have been in the same position, along with details of the officers you will need to contact.

ICT data, equipment and email

1. Files and data stored on your PC or laptop

Once you have made the decision to step down, you may want to spend some time looking at your computer files and data and consider what you want to keep, what you want to destroy and what you want to pass on to other Members or to your Group Office.

If you have been a councillor for a number of years, you may have a large amount of paperwork and electronic data so you may need support from ICT or your Group Office. The following questions may help with this process:

- What Council equipment do you have? Make a list of what you will need to return (PC/laptop, printer, filing cabinet etc) and consider whether you need to replace it.
- What files and data do you need to keep? ICT can help you to transfer computer files from your Council PC to your own computer and can also advise on suitable storage devices.
- What course of action will you take when dealing with casework that will run on after the date that you step down? Depending on your circumstances, you will need to discuss handover arrangements with a current ward colleague or your Group Office.

Please note that there is no provision to keep or purchase Council equipment. Within two weeks of the elections you will be contacted by Democratic Services officers to arrange a convenient time for your equipment to be collected.

2. Email

It is likely that constituents, officers and other contacts will continue to send you emails after you have stepped down. In order to make them aware of your change of circumstances you may want to create an individual 'Out of Office' message. If you decide to do this, please ensure that it is in place as soon after the elections are over.

The following is an example of the kind of Out Of Office message you may want to create:

“Thank you for your email. Please note that from xx date xx I will no longer be a councillor. Please contact one of the following people who will be able to assist you with your query...[insert contact details for the relevant new Member and/or ward colleague].”

If you decide to include personal contact details in your message, please be aware that **anyone** who emails you will receive it. For this reason you may want to email key contacts separately before you leave and inform them of your future contact details privately.

If you do not create your own message, an automated one will be created for you by ICT Services and applied to your email account, using the following wording:

“Cllr xxx stood down from Leeds City Council at the local elections on the 3rd May 2012. If there are any outstanding matters that need to be dealt with please contact the xxx Group Office on xxxx.”

Any Out of Office messages will remain in place for a period of three months.

General advice and support

Whatever the circumstances for retiring or stepping down, you may experience a sense of loss, particularly if you have been a councillor for many years. The following tips have been provided by former councillors who have found themselves in a similar position:

1. Consider putting together a book (use a scrapbook or similar) which charts your achievements and key memories from your time in office. This is an important way of acknowledging the significant impact you have made on the lives of the citizens of Leeds and will provide an opportunity to reflect and remember what you have achieved.
2. Take up the opportunity offered by Member Development for an exit interview. You can do this at any time, not just immediately after making the decision to retire (in fact, this process can be more valuable a few months after retiring).
3. Speak to colleagues who have also retired or stepped down about their experiences and consider ways to continue being involved in the aspects of Council life that you enjoyed.
4. Ask the Member Development team for a copy of your Learning Record (a certificate listing all the learning activities you have undertaken during your time on the Council). This can be used to identify further opportunities for lifelong learning, as evidence of transferable skills for future employers and as evidence of your own learning achievements.
5. If you are stepping down due to employment reasons, consider booking a session with the Member Development Officer prior to leaving in order to update your CV, for interview practice or to get connected with social media.

Contact details

In the first instance please raise any general queries with your Group Office Manager. For specific issues please contact the following:

- To arrange the removal of ICT equipment – Projects and Resources Team, Democratic Services, 24 76005
- To arrange an exit interview, support with future employment, or for a copy of your individual learning record – Kay Sidebottom, Member Development Officer, 39 50878
- For support with the moving and storage of ICT data and files – Andy Keightley, ICT Services, 279174
- For advice about your Council pension arrangements – Angela Brown, Principal Pensions Officer, 247 5040.