

COMMITTEE REPORT

Subject:	<i>Guildhall Access for Members</i>
Committee:	<i>Governance, Policy and HR Committee</i>
Item Number:	<i>9</i>
Date:	<i>5 October 2026</i>
Author:	<i>Sean Saunders, Health & Safety Manager</i>
Report status:	<i>Decision</i>
Confidential / Exempt:	<i>No</i>

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for revised access arrangements for Members entering the Guildhall during normal working hours.
- 1.2. The report outlines the recent implementation of the EntrySign system, the associated building access controls that have been introduced, and the proposal to extend these arrangements to Members.
- 1.3. The Council has introduced the EntrySign electronic signing-in system to improve building security, occupancy monitoring and emergency management arrangements. Staff are now required to access the building using designated entry points and sign in using their identification cards. Visitors, contractors and other persons without compatible identification cards are required to sign in manually via the EntrySign system to the rear of the Information Centre.
- 1.4. Whilst these arrangements have been successfully implemented for staff and visitors, Members are currently not consistently captured within the system. This creates the potential for Members to be present within the building without being included in occupancy records or emergency evacuation procedures.
- 1.5. It is recommended that Members entering the Guildhall during normal working hours follow the same sign-in arrangements as visitors by entering through the Information Centre and recording their attendance via the EntrySign system.
- 1.6. The proposal is not intended to restrict Member access to the Guildhall but to ensure that Members are afforded the same level of protection and accountability within the Council's emergency and safety arrangements as employees, visitors and contractors.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1. Approves the implementation of revised access arrangements requiring Members to enter the Guildhall via the Information Centre and sign in using the EntrySign system during normal working hours.
- 2.2. Notes that these arrangements will not apply to Council meetings and other civic arrangements or events (such as Mayor Making) held outside normal working hours where separate attendance and emergency management arrangements are already in place.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Council has recently implemented EntrySign as its electronic visitor and occupant management system within the Guildhall.
- 3.2. As part of the implementation, all staff are required to access the building through designated controlled entrances and sign in using compatible identification cards. These entrances are the rear staff door (compatible card access only) and the Information Centre (staffed).
- 3.3. Visitors, contractors and other individuals who do not possess compatible access cards are required to sign in manually using the EntrySign terminal located within the Information Centre.
- 3.4. The front entrance to the Guildhall is now generally kept closed during normal working hours and is only opened when pre-arranged activities or events are taking place. On such occasions, the entrance is managed by staff to ensure that all persons entering the building are appropriately monitored and accounted for.
- 3.5. These measures have been introduced to strengthen building security, improve occupancy management and support the Council's emergency and evacuation procedures.

4. Proposal

- 4.1. It is proposed that Members are incorporated into the existing access and occupancy management arrangements for the Guildhall.
- 4.2. Under the proposal, Members attending the Guildhall during normal working hours will enter via the Information Centre and sign in using the EntrySign system before accessing the main building.
- 4.3. Where a Member is expected by an officer, Information Centre staff will contact the relevant officer and request that they come to the Information Centre to meet the Member and escort them into the building. Where a Member arrives without a prior appointment, Information Centre staff will contact the relevant department to identify an appropriate officer to assist.
- 4.4. Members are not proposed to receive staff access permissions or access to the rear staff door, as the purpose of the arrangements is not solely to record attendance, but also to ensure that Members are welcomed into the building, made known to staff and included within the Council's occupancy and emergency management procedures. Access via the Information Centre provides a consistent and controlled point of entry, ensuring that Members can be directed to the appropriate officer, accounted for in the event of an emergency, and supported with any site-specific safety information where required.

- 4.5. The proposed approach also assists with the management of building access during periods when operational arrangements differ from normal public opening hours. Whilst staff entrances may be accessible for operational reasons, the Information Centre provides a single and consistent access route for Members, ensuring that staff are aware of their presence within the building and that occupancy records remain accurate.
- 4.6. Council meetings held outside normal working hours will continue to operate under existing arrangements, with Members entering through the front entrance. Attendance records taken during formal meetings, together with staffing arrangements already in place, provide an alternative means of accounting for occupants and managing emergency situations during these periods.
- 4.7. The proposal will ensure that Members are captured within the Council's occupancy records, enabling accurate monitoring of the number of people within the building at any given time and supporting emergency response procedures.
- 4.8. This will improve the accuracy of occupancy data available to first aiders, fire wardens and those coordinating emergency response activities.

5. Options Considered

5.1. Option 1 – preferred option.

- 5.1.1. Require Members to enter via the Information Centre and sign in and out using the EntrySign system during normal working hours.
- 5.1.2. This option ensures all building occupants are recorded within a single system and can be accounted for during emergency evacuations. It supports a consistent approach to access management and building safety.

5.2. Option 2 – retain existing arrangements.

- 5.2.1. Continue allowing unrestricted Member access without a formal sign-in requirement.
- 5.2.2. This option would allow Members to continue entering the building in the current manner but would not ensure that occupancy records remain complete and accurate.
- 5.2.3. This would leave a gap within the Council's occupancy management and emergency planning arrangements, creating the possibility that Members present within the building may not be identified during an emergency evacuation or subsequent roll call.

- 5.3. Option 1 is recommended as it provides the highest level of occupancy control, supports health and safety objectives, improves emergency preparedness and aligns Member access arrangements with those already in place for other building users.
- 5.4. The provision of staff-style access permissions to Members was considered but not recommended, as it would not provide the same level of visibility, occupancy control or assurance that Members are appropriately accounted for within the Council's emergency management arrangements.

6. Financial Position

- 6.1. No additional expenditure is anticipated as a result of this proposal.

- 6.2. The EntrySign system is already operational and no additional equipment or software licences are required.
- 6.3. There are no significant ongoing revenue implications associated with the proposal.
- 6.4. The proposal represents good value for money as it maximises the benefits gained from the Council's existing investment in EntrySign.

7. Legal and Governance Considerations

- 7.1. The Council has a statutory duty under health and safety legislation to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees and others affected by its activities (Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974).
- 7.2. The Council also has duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to implement suitable fire safety management arrangements, including procedures for the safe evacuation of relevant persons.
- 7.3. The proposal supports effective management of the Council's premises and assists in demonstrating proportionate arrangements for monitoring building occupancy and emergency evacuation.
- 7.4. The Committee is asked to approve the proposed operational arrangements relating to Member access and occupancy management.
- 7.5. Failure to maintain accurate occupancy records may increase the risk of individuals not being accounted for in the event of an emergency evacuation.

8. Consultation and Engagement

- 8.1. Consultation has been undertaken with officers responsible for building management and health and safety arrangements.
- 8.2. Feedback received supports the inclusion of Members within the existing occupancy management system.
- 8.3. This report is being presented to Members to enable consideration of the proposed arrangements before implementation.

9. Strategic and Policy Alignment

- 9.1. The proposal supports the Council's commitment to maintaining safe working environments and effective governance arrangements.
- 9.2. The proposal aligns with the Council's health and safety responsibilities and emergency management procedures.

10. Implementation and Next Steps

- 10.1. Subject to Committee approval, the next steps will be as follows:
 - 10.1.1. Members will be informed of the revised access arrangements.
 - 10.1.2. Appropriate communications will be provided.
 - 10.1.3. Information Centre staff will be updated.

10.2. The anticipated timetable is:

Milestone	Date
Committee approval.	5 October 2026
Member communication issued.	By 9 October 2026
New arrangements implemented.	W/C 12 October 2026

10.3. Responsibility for implementation will sit with Sean Saunders, Health & Safety Manager alongside Luke Harris, Operations Manager.

11. Implications

Implication Area	Impact	Comments / Mitigation
Financial	None	No additional costs anticipated.
Legal	Low	Supports the Council's health and safety obligations and emergency arrangements.
Risk	Low	Reduces risks associated with incomplete occupancy records during emergencies.
Personnel	Low	Minimal additional administrative requirements for Members and Information Centre staff.
Environmental Impact	None	No environmental impact identified
Equalities Impact Statement	Low	Arrangements apply equally to all Members. Reasonable adjustments can be made where required.
Community / Public Impact	None	Internal operational change only.
Procurement / Contractual	None	No procurement implications.
Property / Asset	Low	Supports improved management of access to Council premises.
Data Protection	Low	Data is already processed through the Council's existing EntrySign system and associated controls.

12. Appendices

None.