

Standards Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 15 June 2023

Present:

Nicolé Jackson, Independent Co-opted Member – In the Chair
Councillors Andrews, Connolly, Evans, Good, Lanchbury and Simcock

Ringway Parish Council: Councillor O'Donovan
Geoff Linnell, Independent Co-opted Member

Apologies:

Alan Eastwood, Independent Person

ST/23/33. Interests

Geoff Linnell, Independent Co-opted Member declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as he has been recently elected as a Councillor to Nether Alderley Parish Council.

ST/23/34. Minutes

In receiving the minutes, a Member requested that an update be provided in regard to Member cyber security training (see ST/22/05 Member Development and Training). The Deputy City Solicitor advised that this would be provided following the meeting. _

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023 as a correct record.

ST/23/35. Annual Governance Statement

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that contained the draft 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which had been produced following completion of the annual review of the Council's governance arrangements and systems of internal control. The processes followed to produce the AGS were outlined within the report.

The Chair welcomed the accessible format of the report, commenting that this was useful for the lay reader. A Member stated that this report had also been recently considered by the Audit Committee and the same opinion had been articulated by Members of that Committee.

A Member stated that he welcomed the section of the report that described:

'This includes consideration of the CIPFA Financial Resilience Index which shows the Council to be relatively well placed on earmarked reserves and in a reasonably comfortable mid position on the other indicators.'

The Member commented that this recognition was important and needed to be highlighted.

A Member commented that consideration needed to be given to the wording at the section of the report that discussed data protection to ensure this captured and reported all of the work that is undertaken around this activity. Acknowledging this comment, the Reform and Innovation Manager stated that this would be reviewed.

Decision

To note the report, subject to the above comments.

ST/23/36. Planning Protocol

The Committee considered the report of the City Solicitor that advised on the operation and efficacy of the Planning Protocol. The report described that whilst the Protocol mainly used gender-neutral language, there were some instances where amendment was needed in order to ensure gender-neutral language was used throughout.

In response to a question the Section Planning Manager advised that site visits worked very well, making reference to the protocol.

A Member commented that she welcomed the adoption of gender-neutral terminology and recommended that all Council policies and protocols should adopt this approach when they were reviewed and updated.

Decisions

1. To note the position regarding the operation/efficacy of the Planning Protocol; and
2. To note the proposed amendment to the Planning Protocol.
3. Recommend that all Council policies and protocols should adopt gender neutral terminology when they were reviewed and updated.

ST/23/37. Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members

The Committee considered the report of the City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer that considered the operation and efficacy of the Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members.

The Chair noted that the reporting of Gifts and Hospitality received by the Lord Mayor's office was a relatively recent development and was important for the purposes of openness and transparency. She stated that it was her experience that the majority of gifts given were to the city rather than in a personal capacity.

Decision

To note the report

ST/23/38. The Member/ Officer Relations Protocol

The Committee considered the report of the City Solicitor that provided an update on the operation and efficacy of the Member/Officer Relations Protocol. The report described that the Monitoring Officer did not consider that any amendment of the Protocol was required at this time. However, should a revised Code of Conduct for Members be adopted by full Council a full review of the Protocol would be undertaken to ensure the Protocol aligned with the revised Code.

A member commented that section 2.1 of the report stated, 'Officer and member relationships are good at MCC' and this recognition was particularly welcomed and important to note.

Decisions

To note:

1. The position set out in the report regarding the operation and efficacy of the Member/Officer Relations Protocol.
2. That the Protocol will be reviewed in the event that full Council adopts a revised Code of Conduct for Members.

ST/23/39. Update Use of Resources Guidance

The Committee considered the report of the City Solicitor that provided an update on the operation and efficacy of the Use of Resources Guidance for Members.

In response to a question the Group Manager, Legal Services reiterated to Members that any council resource, including council issued mobile phones should not be used for any party-political activity.

Decisions

1. To note the report.
2. Recommend to full Council the adoption of the revised guidance as attached.

ST/23/40. Work Programme

Consideration was given to the report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit that presented the Work Programme for the Committee. The Committee were invited to approve or amend the Work Programme as appropriate.

Decision

The Committee note and approve the Work Programme.