

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Standards Committee – 16 June 2022

Subject: Review of the Operation and Efficacy of the Member/Officer Relations Protocol

Report of: City Solicitor

Summary

This report provides an update to the Standards Committee on the operation and efficacy of the Member/Officer Relations Protocol.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to:

1. Note the position set out in the report regarding the operation and efficacy of the Member/Officer Relations Protocol
 2. Support the proposed change to the review date section to reflect current practice of annual review of this Protocol.
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Wards Affected: All

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Member/Officer Relations Protocol (“the Protocol”) is contained in Part 6 of the Council’s Constitution. Its purpose, as stated in paragraph 1.1 of the Protocol, is:

“...to guide Members and Officers of the Council in their relations with one another in such a way as to ensure the smooth running of the Council.”

Paragraph 1.4 goes on to say that the Protocol:

“...seeks to reflect the principles underlying the Code of Conduct for Members (“the Members’ Code”) and the Code of Conduct for Employees (“the Employees’ Code”). The shared object of these codes is to enhance and maintain the integrity (real and perceived) of local government and the Codes, therefore, demand very high standards of personal conduct.”

- 1.2 When the Council’s Constitution was reviewed by the Council on 4 November 2021 no changes were deemed necessary in respect of the Protocol. The Protocol was last amended as part of the Council’s 2 October 2019 review of the Constitution, which incorporated recommendations made by the Standards Committee on 13 June 2019. The Standards Committee’s recommendations took into account the best practice recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, along with feedback from both Officers and Members, while also seeking to ensure the language of and references within the Protocol were fully up to date. A copy of the current version of the Protocol is appended to this report.

2.0 The View of the Monitoring Officer on the Operation and Efficacy of the Protocol

- 2.1 The Monitoring Officer is of the view that the existing Protocol is well understood by Members and is not aware of any queries or issues that have not been addressed through existing procedures. This is reflected in the report relating to the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge issued at the end of last year which indicated:

‘Officer and member relationships are good at MCC. They work collaboratively, there is clarity of role and a strong sense of joint purpose. We found an unshakable commitment to the city by the council’s members, staff and all the partners; this joint sense of purpose is a massive strength. As one stakeholder told us ‘Everyone is on the same page-we want the best for Manchester’

- 2.2 The Member Induction Programme includes a session dealing with conduct and ethical standards issues, which includes a section on the Protocol. The induction process for Officers refers new staff to the Employee Code of Conduct, which in turn makes reference to the Protocol. Paragraphs 2.3 and 2.7 of the Protocol cover the situation where a Member wishes to raise issues about an Officer and the reverse scenario. The Monitoring Officer is of the

view that the Protocol is working as intended and if any issues have been raised, they have been resolved in accordance with the processes set out in these paragraphs of the Protocol.

- 2.3 The Monitoring Officer does not consider that any amendment of the Protocol is required at this time other than to change the review provision to reflect that the Protocol is reviewed annually.. However, when the Code of Conduct for Members is next subject to substantive change, she does consider that a full review of the Protocol should be undertaken to align the Protocol with the revised Code.

3.0 Recommendation

- 3.1 The recommendation is set out at the beginning of this report.