

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Standards Committee – 15 June 2023

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 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.
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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 last reviewed by the Council in November 2022 no changes were deemed necessary in respect of the Protocol other than to change the review date to annual review. 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. As indicated in the March 2022 report to this Committee this is reflected in the report relating to the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge in November - December 2021 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. As indicated in the report on member development considered by the Committee at its last meeting the Member /Officer Relations Protocol was also covered in the bespoke ‘induction’ session for Executive members held, for the first-time

last year. 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. However, should a revised Code of Conduct for Members be adopted by full Council a full review of the Protocol will be undertaken to ensure the Protocol aligns with the revised Code.

3.0 Recommendation

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