

COUNCIL

15 FEBRUARY 2024

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

(b) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Review of Member/ Officer Relations Protocol

1. The purpose of the Member / Officer Protocol is to guide Members and Officers of the Council in their relations with one another. The intention is that it supports the establishment of good working relationships between Members and Officers as they work together and describes their different but complementary roles within the Council. A strong, constructive, and trusting relationship between Members and Officers is essential to the effective and efficient working of the Council. It also sets out the behaviours and treatment that each can expect from the other and thereby expands upon the Councillors Code of Conduct.

2. The Protocol for Member and Officer Relations is contained within Appendix 14 of the Council's Constitution. It is an adjunct to the Councillors' Code of Conduct and is an important contributor to the working culture within the Council. It sets out the differing roles of members and officers, what they can expect from each other and provides further explanation and guidance on appropriate behaviours.

3. To ensure best practice the current protocol is being assessed against the protocols operated by other local authorities. The Monitoring Officer will consult with the Group Leaders, the Council's Chief Officers (Senior Leadership Team and Chief Officer Group) and Independent Persons. The Committee has asked that the review has regard to the following issues:

- The possibility of making training mandatory for members in relation to code of conduct and the member/ officer protocol;
- Clearer signposting to the Protocol on the Council's web site;
- Consideration of the inclusion of issues outside the Nolan principle including: communication; relationships between individuals; confidentiality; social media; access to information; regular reviews; and accessibility to the Protocol;
- The inclusion of a pre-election guide;
- The inclusion of an Executive Summary;
- Guidance on the tone used in emails and de-escalation practices; and
- The need for the Protocol to be concise and easy to understand.

4. Following this work, a revised Member/ Officer protocol will be drafted and presented at the Committee meeting on 22 April with a recommendation that the

protocol be referred to the next Council meeting (May) for approval. The Committee has noted the progress on the review of the Member/ Officer protocol.

Work Programme

5. The Committee has noted its work programme.

Cllr Bob Brookes
Chairman

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

Simon Lewis, Committee Officer

Tel: 01905 846621

Email: slewis@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee held on 17 January 2024.

[Agenda for Standards and Ethics Committee on Wednesday, 17th January, 2024, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)