



Governance and Audit Committee

Item
12

13 December 2023

Report of	Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer	Author	Andrew Weavers ☎ 282213
Title	Review of the Member / Officer Protocol		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council has agreed a Member / Officer Protocol which provides a framework for good working relationships between Councillors and Officers, and which is included in the Constitution. This report requests the Committee to review the Member / Officer Protocol.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To approve the Member / Officer Protocol attached to this report and that it be included in the Council's Constitution.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Member / Officer Protocol is contained in Part 5 of the Constitution. This Protocol provides a framework for good working relationships between Councillors and Officers, to define their respective roles and provide some principles governing conduct. The Committee last reviewed the Protocol at its meeting on 22 November 2022 when no changes were proposed.
- 3.2 The Full Council at its meeting on 18 October 2023 agreed a motion regarding transparency and as part of that it became subsequently apparent that there were no agreed response times in which officers should be responding to councillor enquiries. The Leader and the Head of Governance considered that this could be best addressed by setting out clear expectations in the Member / Officer Protocol.
- 3.3 The suggested changes are detailed at paragraphs 16 and 17 of the Member / Officer Protocol attached to this report. The proposed response times are consistent with those of other Local Authorities and set out a clear process and timescales which will provide certainty for councillors. It is also proposed that councillor enquiries will be logged via an App which will provide an audit trail of the enquires and ensure that requests are monitored and responded to within the agreed timescales. The details of how this will work in practice are currently being finalised with the intention that the new process is launched early in the New Year.
- 3.5 Once the details have been finalised and agreed, a communications exercise will be undertaken to launch the process with both councillors and officers to ensure awareness. It is proposed that the process is kept under review and that a report is brought back to this Committee next year on the process's effectiveness etc.
- 3.6 The remainder of the Member / Officer Protocol remains fit for purpose and no other changes are proposed.

4. Strategic Plan References

- 4.1 The manner in which the Council governs its business is an underpinning mechanism in the Council's Strategic priorities to set out the direction and future potential for our city.

5. Publicity Considerations

5.1 The Member / Officer Protocol forms part of the Council's Constitution which is published on the Council's website

6. Financial, Equality, Diversity and Human Rights, Consultation, Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Environmental and Sustainability Implications

6.1 None.