

Review of Member / Officer Protocol

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Purpose of the report

As part of the agreed regular review of guidance and protocols promoted by this Committee, to seek the views of members on the current Protocol on Member/Officer Relations to identify whether further guidance or advice needs to be given and to agree to consult with a number of members and officers on their experiences in this area and what amendments or other changes they would wish to see introduced.

Recommendations

- (1) To consider whether the Protocol continues to be fit for purpose or whether additional advice or guidance needs to be given or whether additional provisions need to be added.
- (2) To agree to consult with members and officers to seek wider views on the Protocol; and report these back to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

Background

The Protocol on Member/Officer relations forms part of the constitution of the council. The Standards Committee has a responsibility to promote high ethical standards across the council. The Protocol is one of the methods by which such a responsibility is discharged.

The Protocol was last reviewed in June 2010 and provides that it will be regularly reviewed by this committee. This review is in the committee's work programme as being something to be undertaken every two years.

The Protocol

Members will find attached to this report, as Appendix A, a copy of the current Protocol.

It is felt that all areas of the relationships between members and officers currently fall within the Protocol. Indeed such issues between officers and members are, in any event, thankfully extremely rarely encountered at this council. As a broad rule the relationship between members and officers is regarded as being good and that is to be applauded as much more can be done through co-operation than ever will be achieved through conflict. Notwithstanding this, members of this committee may well feel that certain additional areas are worthy of inclusion within the Protocol. The Protocol as amended by this committee would require council approval before it would form part of the council's constitution. The Protocol whether or not revised would be the subject of further reviews by this committee at 2 yearly intervals and be fed into the committee's work programme.

The Monitoring Officer's view is that the protocol is currently fit for purpose but that both he and this Committee would benefit from hearing the views of other members and officers. To ensure that such views were given without fear or favour it is suggested that all response be

“anonymous” although a distinction made between those received from officers and those received from members. The Monitoring Officer would propose to contact each Assistant Director and ask them to collect any responses from people in their team and likewise with Area Chairs and members within each Area Committee. There have been no issues raised since its adoption by either members or officers that would tend to suggest that it requires significant revision at this stage but the feedback from others may help to flag up issues that are currently just below the surface and be able to take appropriate remedial action.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications at this stage.

Other Implications

There are no other implications.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

None from this report.

Background Papers: Constitution of SSDC
