

24 July 2019

Agenda Item: 13

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND EMPLOYEES / MONITORING OFFICER

UPDATE ON USE OF RESOURCES BY COUNCILLORS

Purpose of the Report

1. To present Committee with an update on the use of resources by Councillors.

Information and Advice

Background

2. At the meeting of Full Council on 10 May 2018, a revised Code of Conduct for Councillors and Co-opted Members was agreed. The new Code included a range of protocols, including the Councillor and Co-opted Member Protocol for use of Resources (attached for the Committee's reference at **Appendix A**). This Protocol's guiding principles include the need to be mindful of costs and not using resources for political purposes.
3. Governance and Ethics Committee is responsible for taking an overview of this issue and the Committee has so far received an initial update report to its meeting in December 2018, with a follow up report in January 2019. At the 30 January 2019 meeting, the Committee agreed the following resolutions which have now been actioned as appropriate:-
 - a. That the planned reimbursement of the costs of personal printing jobs by the Councillor for Ashfields division be noted, and that the approach be endorsed that any private printing by Councillors must be identified and agreed with the Print Office team in advance, who will then raise a charge for that work in line with their usual business practices and that this be communicated to Members.
 - b. That a limit on printing for each political group not be introduced at this time, but that this matter be kept under review and that reporting printing costs for the Mansfield Independents and the Council Chairman be shown separately in future.
 - c. That the use of Shireoaks Village Hall as a venue for Councillor Surgeries by the Councillor for Worksop West at a cost of £8 per month be allowed to continue.
 - d. That the use of Focus Point as a venue for Councillor Surgeries by the Councillors for Mansfield North at a cost of £900 per year be discontinued on the grounds of cost, but that six months be allowed for alternative processes to be put in place.

- e. That any effective mechanisms for monitoring postal usage be explored by officers, and this be reported back at a future meeting.
- f. That Members be reminded of the provisions of the Travel and Accommodation policy and that this be monitored and reported back to Committee as necessary.
- g. That Members be reminded of the provisions of the Protocol on use of Resources including the Travel and Accommodation Policy.

Further Update on Resolutions Agreed by the Committee

- 4. With regard to Resolution a. above, the Councillor for Ashfields Division, has underlined his willingness to repay the costs relating to private print jobs. Officers are in the process of clarifying the exact amounts for the period in question so that the payment can then be arranged.
- 5. With regard to Resolution e. above, discussions have taken place with the Team Manager, Solutions4Data, Mail and Despatch about this issue. There have been no requests received from any Councillors for the Committee to consider the need for the 50 item limit on postage to be exceeded for specific items. Currently, Central Mail Room only alert Democratic Services to any significantly large mail outs from the political groups and individual Councillors. The Use of Resources Protocol underlines that post may be opened by the Post Room at County Hall should there be any concerns that the relevant guidelines are not being adhered to.
- 6. As with the previous six month period, no concerns have been raised about the level and frequency of outgoing mail from the political groups during this period. It is therefore proposed that at this stage this issue continues to be monitored by officers and that the Committee be informed should there be any concerns in future.

Printing and Photocopying Costs

- 7. A breakdown of printing and photocopying costs for the period November 2018 to March 2019 is included at **Appendix B**.
- 8. The Committee's views are sought on the expenditure and whether any further information or actions are required on specific items of expenditure.
- 9. As agreed by the Committee in January 2019, the Team Manager – Democratic Services, from his monitoring of the relevant Democratic Services budgets, will highlight any areas of concern on an ongoing basis.

Other Options Considered

- 10. None – the report provides an update on expenditure as required in the revised Code of Conduct and the revised Councillor and Co-opted Member Protocol for use of Resources and seeks relevant approvals where required.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

11. To update the Committee and seek relevant approvals in line with the requirements of the revised Code of Conduct and the revised Councillor and Co-opted Member Protocol for use of Resources.

12. To ensure relevant and useful information is included in such reports in future.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:-

- 1) Considers the update on resolutions agreed by the Committee at its 30 January 2019 meeting and whether any further information or actions are required.
- 2) Considers the relevant resources expenditure for the period November 2018 – March 2019 and decides whether there is any further information required or any actions required on specific items of expenditure.

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Constitutional Comments (SLB)

Governance and Ethics Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report. If Committee resolves that any actions are required it must be satisfied that such actions are within the Committee's terms of reference.

Financial Comments [RWK 01/07/2019]

There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report.

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All