



Meeting GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date Tuesday 18 December 2018 (commencing at 1.00 pm)

membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

Bruce Laughton (Chairman)
Andy Sissons (Vice-Chairman)

Nicki Brooks
Steve Carr **A**
Mrs Kay Cutts MBE
Kate Foale
Errol Henry JP

John Longdon
Rachel Madden
Keith Walker
Gordon Wheeler

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Glen Bicknell
Adam Crevald
Keith Ford
Denise Makar
Nigel Stevenson
Marjorie Toward



Chief Executive's Department

Paul McKay

Adult Social Care and Health Department

John Gregory
Lorraine Noake

Grant Thornton External Auditors

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 6 November 2018, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rachel Madden (illness).

The following temporary changes of membership, for this meeting only, were reported:-

- Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE had replaced Councillor Phil Rostance
- Councillor Gordon Wheeler had replaced Councillor John Handley
- Councillor John Longdon had replaced Councillor Mike Quigley MBE.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None

4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN (LGSCO) ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER

Keith Ford, Team Manager – Democratic Services, introduced the report which informed the Committee of the Annual Review Letter from the LGSCO for 2018.

RESOLVED: 2018/060

That no actions were required in relation to the issues contained within the report.

5. UPDATE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN DECISIONS

Keith Ford, Team Manager – Democratic Services, introduced the report which informed the Committee of recent Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) decisions about the Council.

During discussions, Members referenced the complaint not investigated by the LGSCO due to it being out of timescale and requested further information about the timescales followed and their appropriateness.

RESOLVED: 2018/061

That further information about the timescales for making complaints be included in the next update report to this Committee.

6. INFORMATION GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME: PROGRESS UPDATE

Caroline Agnew, Programme Manager, introduced the report which informed the Committee of progress in delivering the Council's Information Governance Improvement Programme.

Members requested further clarification of the rules around the use and retention of information obtained by Councillors through questionnaires, petitions etc and the process for reporting potential breaches of these rules.

RESOLVED: 2018/062

- 1) That a follow-up report on the Information Governance Improvement Programme be submitted to the Committee in six months' time.
- 2) That an Information Governance Action Plan be submitted to the Committee in March 2019 for approval, with quarterly performance updates against the Action Plan scheduled within the Committee's work programme.

7. NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE CYBER SECURITY AND INFORMATION RISK GUIDANCE FOR AUDIT COMMITTEES

Adam Crevald, Group Manager – Customer and Service Design, introduced the report which provided Members with a review of the National Audit Office’s cyber security advice for audit committees.

RESOLVED: 2018/063

That an update report be submitted to the Committee in six months’ time.

8. EXTERNAL AUDIT - PROGRESS REPORT

John Gregory, external auditor (Grant Thornton) introduced the report and sought Members’ views on the content and format.

During discussions, Members queried whether the content of future update reports needed to be more concise and specific to Nottinghamshire and County Councils. However, the importance of members of the Committee having an understanding of the wider context and national perspective was also recognised.

RESOLVED: 2018/064

That Members’ views on the External Auditors’ latest progress report be noted.

9. COUNTER FRAUD PROGRESS REPORT

Simon Lacey, Audit Team Leader, introduced the report which updated the Committee on Counter Fraud work undertaken in the first two terms of the 2018-19 Internal Audit Plan.

RESOLVED 2018/065

- 1) That the draft policy statement on the ‘Facilitation of Tax Evasion’ be endorsed and recommended to the Policy Committee for adoption.
- 2) That no additional actions to tackle fraud and no further reports on the actions already being taken were required at this stage.

10. UPDATE ON USE OF THE COUNCILLORS’ DIVISIONAL FUND

Keith Ford, Team Manager, Democratic Services, introduced the report which provided a six monthly update on the use of the Councillors’ Divisional Fund.

During discussions, Members requested that, in future such reports, consideration be given to collating the expenditure into different categories in order to highlight any shortfalls for particular activities that may require a more corporate approach as part of the Council’s overall budget. In response it was underlined that the new ‘self-serve’ system should enable collation by Council Plan priorities in future.

RESOLVED: 2018/066

- 1) That the CDF expenditure for the period April-September 2018 detailed in Appendix A be noted.

- 2) That the outcomes of the planned audit exercise be included in the next six monthly update to the Committee.
- 3) That the plans to introduce a new electronic 'self-serve' system be supported.

11. UPDATE ON USE OF RESOURCES BY COUNCILLORS

Keith Ford, Team Manager, Democratic Services, introduced the report which provided the first update to the Committee on this issue, in line with the revised Code of Conduct for Councillors and Co-opted Members.

During discussions Members requested that further information be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee about:-

- the reasons for any potentially excessive printing costs, with further details sought from the Councillors in question and from the Multi-Function Device providers where appropriate;
- the variation in the costs of business cards;
- the particular reasons why Councillors were choosing to use non-County Council buildings for some case surgeries.

Members also felt that the Committee needed to give further consideration to agreeing set limits for printing by Councillors and support officers (with the limits proportionate to the number of Councillors within a political group) and to agreeing the processes for monitoring and enforcing these limits. Members also thought the criteria and processes for using other resources such as external postage and taxis needed further consideration also (with Members of the Committee also underlining that there were more cost-effective, electronic means of dealing with constituents these days).

With regard to any other areas of resources, Members requested that the Team Manager, Democratic Services include any areas of concern or discrepancies within future six monthly monitoring reports.

RESOLVED: 2018/069

- 1) That in relation to the resources expenditure for the period April-October 2018, further information be requested from Councillor Zadrozny about the reasons for potentially excessive printing costs and that this information be reported to the next meeting of the Committee along with further details about the variations in costs relating to business cards.
- 2) That postage and printing and photocopying costs relating to the Nottinghamshire County Council Chairman and Vice-Chairman civic roles be recorded and reported separately from this point onwards.
- 3) That the requirement for advance Governance & Ethics Committee approval for outgoing mail outs in excess of 50 items and the use of alternative venues for case surgeries be reinforced with Councillors, subject to further consideration of these issues by the Committee.

- 4) That all outgoing mail from Councillors be sent from the political groups (or from the Governance Team in Democratic Services in relation to non-aligned Councillors) and the cost be logged on an ongoing basis from this point onwards.
- 5) That the reasons for the continued use of Shireoaks Village Hall as a venue for Councillor Surgeries be requested from Councillor Fielding and reported to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 6) That the reasons for the continued use of Focus Point as a venue for Councillor Surgeries be requested from Councillors Bosnjak and Tsimbiridis and reported to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 7) That the Team Manager, Democratic Services include any other areas of resources of concern or discrepancies within the next six monthly overview report to this Committee.

12. WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: 2018/068

That the work programme be agreed, subject to the inclusion of a further report on Use of Resources by Councillors in January 2019 and the inclusion of an item to a future meeting about transparency and access to information in relation to informal and formal meetings of the Council (in line with the motion agreed by Full Council on 13 December 2019).

The meeting closed at 2.27pm.

CHAIRMAN