



Meeting GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date Monday 16 October 2023 (commencing at 2pm)

membership

COUNCILLORS

Philip Owen (Chairman)
Johno Lee (Vice-Chairman)

Richard Butler
Samantha Deakin
Errol Henry JP - **Apologies**
Andy Meakin
Michael Payne

Sue Saddington
Helen-Ann Smith - **Apologies**
Nigel Turner
Roger Upton

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Jim Creamer substituting for Councillor Errol Henry JP
Councillor Tom Hollis substituting for Councillor Helen-Ann Smith

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Louise Benson - Children and Families
Lynda Poole
Richard Elston - Chief Executives
Keith Ford
Kaj Ghattaora
Simon Lacey
Kate Morris
Marjorie Toward
Nigel Stevenson

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 19 July 2023, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillor Errol Henry (Other Reasons)
- Councillor Helen-Ann Smith (Other Reasons)

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

4. UPDATE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN DECISIONS (AUGUST TO SEPTEMBER 2023)

The report set out three cases where fault was found by the Ombudsman and Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and seek assurance from officers around action put in place by the relevant departments regarding those complaints.

Members raised concerns about the occurrence of complaints being upheld around Education Health and Care Plans. Members were also concerned about communication with parents in these cases.

Members encouraged officers to continue to challenge decision outcomes where appropriate as was advised earlier in the year at a meeting with the Local Ombudsman representative.

RESOLVED: 2023/35

That members note the findings of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and welcome the lessons learned and actions taken in response to the findings

5. RESPONSE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN DECISION 2023

The report detailed the work undertaken to improve the Authorities performance around Education Health & Care Plan annual reviews as requested by the committee in response to an increasing number of complaints to the Ombudsman.

Members were please to hear that additional EHC Plan writers were being recruited and acknowledged the difficult national picture of rising demand and shortage of Educational Psychologists.

Members also welcomed the improved processes around communication with parents but highlighted that there was still much work to be done to ensure improvement continued.

RESOLVED: 2023/36

- 1) That Members note the improvements made to increase the Local Authority's Education, Health and Care Plan Annual Review performance.
- 2) That the Committee receives a further report in 12 months' time to review the impact of the measures introduced.

6. UPDATE ON USE OF RESOURCES BY COUNCILLORS

The report set out the use of resources by Councillors between April 2022 and March 2023.

When queried by a member of the committee the Chairman confirmed that no breach of the rules had occurred when a Member held an interview in their office at County Hall, and photos taken outside County Hall.

Members asked for assurance that the issue with phone contracts was being addressed and suggested that in future reports a little more context was added to prevent any potential misunderstanding around out of contract charges.

RESOLVED: 2023/37

- 1) That members note the relevant resources expenditure for the period April 2022 to March 2023 as detailed in Appendix B and Appendix C to the report.
- 2) That members agree that following the change to a new mobile provider in November 2023, further guidance to prevent the incurring of Out of Contract Charges be circulated to Members.

7. FINANCIAL REGULATION WAIVERS 2022-23

The annual report set out all requests through 2022/23 to waive financial regulations and the outcomes of those requests. Members were given the opportunity to ask questions on the details in the report.

RESOLVED: 2023/38

- 1) That Members noted the detail contained in the report Financial Regulations Waivers 2022/23 and the continued progress in keeping waivers to a minimum.

8. BEST VALUE AUTHORITIES GUIDANCE CONSULTATION

The report set out the Council's response to the Government's consultation entitled 'Best value standards and intervention - a statutory guide for best value authorities.'

Members asked whether arms length companies were taken into consideration and officers confirmed that they had been considered within the response to the consultation

RESOLVED: 2023/39

- 1) That Members note the response to the consultation provided by the Council

9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE JULY 2023

The report summarised the key messages from the Local Government Association Conference & Exhibition, which took place in Bournemouth in July 2023.

RESOLVED: 2023/40

- 1) Members note the contents of this report.

- 2) Going forward summaries of key messages from attended conferences be circulated to Committee members as briefing notes.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: 2023/41

That the work programme be accepted

The meeting closed at 14:44

CHAIRMAN