



Meeting GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date Wednesday 25 November 2020 (commencing at 10.30 am)

membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

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

Nicki Brooks
Steve Carr
Kate Foale **A**
John Handley
Errol Henry JP

Rachel Madden
Phil Rostance **A**
Keith Walker
Martin Wright

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Richard Butler for Phil Rostance
Pauline Allan for Kate Foale

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Glen Bicknell Chief Executive's Department
Heather Dickinson
Rob Disney
Keith Ford
David Hennigan
Jo Kirkby
Simon Lacey
Keith Palframan
Nigel Stevenson
Marjorie Toward

INDEPENDENT PERSONS

Ian Bayne
Craig Cole
Rob White

EXTERNAL ATTENDEES

John Gregory Grant Thornton
Lorraine Noak

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 12 October 2020, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The following apologies for absence were reported:-

Councillor Kate Foale – other County Council business
Councillor Phil Rostance – other reasons

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None

4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN (LGSCO) DECISIONS – SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2020

Jo Kirkby, Team Manager, Complaints and Information introduced the report which informed Members of the latest complaint decisions by the LGSCO.

RESOLVED: 2020/042

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

5. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2019-20

Glen Bicknell, Senior Accountant introduced the report which presented the draft Statement of Accounts 2019-20 and sought a delegation of authority to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Committee to approve this along with the required letters of representation.

John Gregory, Director of Grant Thornton (the Council's external auditors) outlined the key issues from the Audit Findings update appended to the report.

RESOLVED: 2020/043

- 1) That the contents of the External Audit Report 2019-20 be noted.
- 2) That approval of the Statement of Accounts 2019-20 and the letters of representation be delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Chair of Governance and Ethics Committee.

6. INTERNAL AUDIT 2020-21 TERM 3 PLAN

Simon Lacey, Audit Team Leader, introduced the report which provided an update on plans for Term 3 and progress with Term 2 of the Internal Audit Plan.

RESOLVED: 2020/044

- 1) That no further actions or reports were required arising from the contents of the report.
- 2) That the planned coverage of Internal Audit's work be progressed to help deliver assurance to the Committee in priority areas.

7. COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE – PROGRESS WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Heather Dickinson, Group Manager – Legal and Democratic Services, introduced the report which sought approval for the Council's response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life's request for an update with the implementation of the best practice recommendations.

The Council's appointed Independent Persons raised the following issues with the proposed response:

- it was felt that it would be helpful to define what was meant by 'regularly' seeking views in relation to reviewing the Council's Code;
- it would be helpful for the Code to be made readily accessible rather than available only upon request;
- the Independent Persons were happy to be consulted about whether an allegation should proceed to formal investigation, depending on the Council's preferred approach to this issue. It would be helpful if the Independent Persons could be notified about complaints received.
- it would be helpful to include a definition of bullying and harassment within the Code and it was acknowledged that already established legal definitions should be utilised.

During discussions, Members raised the following points for further consideration and implementation:

- following the publication of the new Model Code of Conduct by the Local Government Association, it would be helpful to establish a cross-party working group to consider the implications for the Council's own Code, including the issue of reporting from separate bodies such as arms-length management companies;
- that a review of the Code could be scheduled within the Committee's work programme on an annual basis with a report only presented to Committee in those years in which issues or proposed changes need ed to be shared;
- that the word 'trivial' in relation to complaints be replaced with 'minor'.

RESOLVED: 2020/045

- 1) That the update response be amended to reflect the issues raised by the Independent Persons and Members and submitted to the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
- 2) That a further report be brought to Committee after publication of the revised Model Code of Conduct, outlining the next steps for implementation of the Model Code in Nottinghamshire and to enable consideration of any further changes required to the Council's Code of Conduct.

8. MEMBERS COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME PROGRESS UPDATE

Heather Dickinson, Group Manager – Legal and Democratic Services, introduced the report which updated the Committee on progress made across the Programme, with specific focus on the actions relating to training development.

During discussions, Members requested that further consideration be given by the previously established member working group to the issue of how best to provide support to Members with their learning and development needs – for example, through dedicated contacts, political group support officers or members of the Governance Team.

RESOLVED: 2020/046

- 1) That the overall approach being taken towards improving member training and development be approved.
- 2) That no further topics be added to the draft induction and training programme at this stage.
- 3) That the member working group undertake further detailed work on the induction and training programme; consideration of a survey of members' needs; best use of, and access to, available training budgets; and design, accessibility and content for the learning portal; and report back to a future meeting of the Committee early in 2021.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: 2020/047

That the work programme be agreed, with no further changes required.

The meeting closed at 12.05 pm.

CHAIRMAN