

Member and Officer Working Task Group

28 April 2022

Briefing Paper

1. BACKGROUND

Council on 15 December 2021 considered a report on the topic of a member and officer working update. A copy of the report can be found [here](#).

Following the meeting separate workshops were held with officers and members on 18 and 26 January respectively to collate feedback on the present working relationship, areas of focus and what proposals should be considered as part of future arrangements. The following are some key areas of focus that were highlighted in the workshops that could be used as the basis for evidence gathering for the review:

- Member Case Management System
- Creation of Member Profiles on Sharepoint
- Regular Newsletter for Members
- Update to Member Sharepoint page
- Member Workshops- Open invite to members to provide updates on key projects coming forward
- Review of both the Corporate/Manager Induction Programme- Does this provide the required overview in respect of the engagement with Members?
- Member engagement to be incorporated as a standing item within 1-1s and Team Meetings

2. SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

On 2 March 2022, the Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the one-page strategy for the review, which is appended.

3. PROGRAMME OF WORK

The work of the task group will be based on the following stages:

- Evidence gathering - Members will be asked to consider what information will be needed to meet the objectives for the review.
- Consideration of the evidence – once the information has been collected the task group will meet to consider and analyse it. Officers will support Members in formulating their findings.
- Review findings - it is important that the review findings and the final recommendations are drawn out of the evidence and are adequately supported by it.

- Draft review report - based on Members' findings and recommendations, officers will prepare a draft report for approval by the Scrutiny Committee and submission to Cabinet and Council.

During discussion the task group should agree how many meetings are required and the outline of items and information that will be required for consideration at each meeting.

If Members wish to gather any further evidence from officers, Management Team has nominated Henry Biddington as a representative to attend any meetings.

REVIEW OF MEMBER AND OFFICER WORKING

ONE-PAGE STRATEGY

What is the broad topic area?

To assess how well members and officers work together and identify areas for improvement

What is the specific topic area?

To understand the present officer and member working relationship and consider what changes could be made to encourage a positive, constructive and professional environment that will better support members, officers and the Council as a whole.

What should be considered?

- The council constitution including the chapters on the Councillors Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation
- Clarifying the respective roles of members and officers and political leadership structures, including the role of statutory officers
- Development, strengthening skills and knowledge, for both members and officers
- Communication guidance, to include:
 - the handling of information shared with members
 - guidance on the use of social media
 - best practice for how information is communicated by officers to members and how members should communicate with officers
 - communication between officers and Members where matters relating to casework were being reported to the organisation.
- Recognising and managing expectations
- The process for how complaints or concerns about conduct should be handled
- The outcomes of the member and officer workshops
- Whether a formal written protocol should be created as a tool for members and officers to achieve an enhanced working relationship.

Who shall we consult?

Members and officers.

Examples of best practice from other local authorities.

How long should it take?

The review will be completed by April 2022.

What will be the outcome?

Recommendations that will result in a proactive and positive approach to member-officer relations with clear benefits for the Council. Constructive relations between members and officers is key to achieving good governance and in meeting the Council's aims and objectives.