

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Chief Executive

To

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

On

26 November 2020

Report prepared by: Sarah Brown, Policy Advisor, SBC
Cecilia Tredget, Managing Director, East of England LGA

Refresh of Protocol on Councillor / Officer Relations

Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 On 11 November 2020 the Standards Committee completed its work on the refresh of the Protocol on Councillor /Officer Relations.
- 1.2 The Standards Committee has made recommendations to full Council, including that a new Protocol should be adopted, along with an Action Plan to help embed the ethos of the Protocol.
- 1.3 It was agreed at the start of the process that the final recommendations of the Standards Committee to Council would first be available for scrutiny at Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee (minute 373(3) of the Standards Committee on 3 October 2019 refers). This report provides the opportunity for such scrutiny, before the matter goes to Council on 10 December 2020.
- 1.4 The Chair of Standards Committee and Cecilia Tredget, formerly Managing Director of the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA), will be available at the meeting to answers questions.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the report which was submitted to the Standards Committee on 11 November 2020 (**Appendix 1**) and the Committee's final recommendations to Council, as set out in the minutes of the meeting (**Appendix 2**).

3 Background

- 3.4 On the 3rd October 2019, Standards Committee agreed to review and refresh the Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations, in Part 5d of the Constitution. The aim of the work is to improve the effective working relations between Councillors and Officers.

- 3.5 The EELGA representative (Cecilia Tredget), met with each Party or Group Leader and their members, as well as non-aligned Councillors to gain representations. Officers also had the opportunity to feed into the review via written feedback and face to face interviews.
- 3.6 A summary of both the Councillor and Officer contributions by theme along with recommendations were presented to Standards Committee on 28th July 2020.
- 3.4 On 11 November 2020, Standards Committee agreed to recommend to Council that a new Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations be adopted along with a programme of work, formed of actions derived from both the Councillor and Officer's contributions, to embed the ethos of the Protocol-across the Council.
A copy of the report to the Standards Committee and the corresponding minute of the meeting held on 11 November 2020 are attached at **Appendices 1 and 2** respectively.

4 Action Plan

- 4.1 As mentioned above, in addition to a new Protocol, the Standards Committee has recommended a number of actions which aim to help embed the new Protocol and enhance positive working relations. These actions reflect the contributions made by both Councillors and Officers during the representations stage of this work.
- 4.2 Opportunities to progress a number of the actions have already presented themselves. Taking these opportunities demonstrates the commitment across the Council for improved and more effective working relations.
For example:
- The Director of ICT and Digital, Carol Thomas has begun meeting with Councillors to better understand Councillor's requirements from ICT as well as developing a plan to raise digital literacy.
 - Work is ongoing to improve the Councillor Queries process with a dedicated Members Support Hub.
 - A pipeline of training for Officers has been extended to Councillors including Equalities and Diversity training, in which a cross party selection of Councillors have contributed to the design of the final offer.

5. Other Options

- 5.1 To not update the Protocol, but this would be a missed opportunity.

6. Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The recommendations of the Standards Committee will aid more effective working relations between Councillors and officers and will strengthen good practices.

7. Corporate Implications

- 7.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

This work aims to increase effective working relationships between Councillors and Officers, which in turn enables more opportunity for greater understanding of priorities, strengthened collaboration, and better outcomes towards the Southend 2050 roadmap.

This work supports the Transforming Together theme work on behaviours and cultures and specifically the Council's agreed values and behaviours. In addition, it supports the TT conditions for closer collaboration with staff, Councillors, residents and partners and simple and effective governance, as well as to building an agile, collaborative and skilled workforce equipped to deliver Southend 2050

7.2 Financial Implications

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report, there may be some in the future.

7.3 Legal Implications

The new Protocol needs to be agreed by full Council.

7.4 People Implications

This work aims to enhance the effective working relations between Councillors and Officers and to help build upon the culture underpinned by the values and behaviours work.

7.5 Property Implications

There are no property implications at this stage.

7.6 Consultation

Consultation exercises have been undertaken with Councillors and Officers as outlined in the body of the report.

7.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

The report highlights an opportunity to raise awareness of equality implications for Councillors and Officers when interacting. The report further addresses how effective working could be enhanced by the values and behaviours programme of work.

7.8 Risk Assessment

Poor relations between Councillors and Officers risks reducing the effectiveness of outcomes for residents and risks damage to the reputation of the Council. The report outlines some steps to better raise awareness and address these issues.

7.9 Value for Money

This report aims to address and balance the significant Councillor and Officer time spent, on unproductive ways of working.

7.10 Community Safety Implications

There are no community safety implications.

7.11 Environmental Impact

There is no environmental impact of this work.

6. Background Papers

Previous Reports to the Standards Committee on the refresh of the Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations on 3 October 2019 and 28 July 2020.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Report to Standards Committee 11 November 2020

Appendix 2 – Minutes of Standards Committee 11 November 2020