

Selection & Constitutional Review Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Selection & Constitutional Review Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **11th April 2019**.

Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);
Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Bennett, Bradford, Burgess, Clokie, Galpin, Hicks, Koowaree.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Barrett, Ovenden.

Also Present:

Cllr. Shorter

Chief Executive, Director of Law and Governance, Member Services Manager (Operational).

412 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 14th March 2019 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

413 A Protocol for an Effective Councillor/Officer Relationship

The report proposed a draft protocol for an effective Councillor/Officer relationship. The Leader advised that this was a timely report following the recent LGA Peer Review and in order to embed the new guidance ahead of the upcoming elections for a new Council. He said it was important for Elected Members to behave properly and to provide a good example to new Councillors coming in. He also drew attention to Section 6 of the protocol which provided details of the Council's three Statutory Officers and the Office of the Leader of the Council.

The Committee was very supportive of the draft protocol. It was acknowledged that there were times when Members' enthusiasm and desire to get things done could be misinterpreted and this document would provide a useful reminder for all.

Recommended:

That the draft Protocol for an Effective Councillor/Officer Relationship, as attached to the report, be approved and adopted for inclusion in the Council's Constitution with effect from 2nd May 2019, in place of the current Protocol on Member/Officer Relations.

414 Adoption of Revised Code of Conduct

The Director of Law and Governance introduced the report which sought formal agreement of changes to the wording of the Code of Conduct for Members to take in to account the adoption of new Social Media Guidance for Members. The principle had already been agreed by the Council via the Standards Committee.

A Member said that whilst he agreed with the proposals he did have some concern over the interpretation of "reasonable person" with regard to considering something offensive or abusive. This did vary greatly and the bar may be a lot lower for those unfamiliar with social media. The Committee generally considered that making it clear in social media profiles in which capacity you were acting was key and it was important to act sensibly and circumspectly when using social media. The Director of Law and Governance advised that any complaint about Members' social media use would initially be considered by himself in his role of Monitoring Officer and ultimately, if necessary, by 'peers' as part of a Standards Committee Assessment Panel. The protocol included guidance, not policy, so whilst there were no 'hard and fast rules' it was good advice that would be an extra aid for Members and help them avoid some of the potential pitfalls of social media use.

Recommended:

That the amended Code of Conduct for Members attached to the report, with the changes shown in bold type, be adopted with effect from the 2nd May 2019.

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