

Governance and Ethics Committee

Minutes - 14 March 2024

Attendance

Members of the Governance and Ethics Committee

Cllr Rita Potter (Chair)
Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal
Cllr Lovinyer Daley
Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Anwen Muston
Cllr Susan Roberts MBE
Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Jonathan Crofts

Employees

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| David Pattison | Chief Operating Officer |
| Surjit Tour | Deputy Director of Governance |
| Laura Gittos | Head of Governance |
| Laura Noonan | Electoral Services and Scrutiny Manager |
| Jas Kaur | Democratic Services and Systems Manager, |
| Donna Cope | Democratic Services Office |
| Chloe Elwell | Organisational Development Advisor |
| Joanna Grocott | Head of People Development and Experience |

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rohit Mistry
- 2 Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest made.
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting**
That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.
- 4 Matters arising**
There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

5 **Petitions Schedule**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the report: Petitions Schedule. The report provided an overview of petitions received by the Council over the last twelve months and outlined the actions taken.

Jaswinder Kaur, Democratic Services and Systems Manager, outlined the report, highlighting key points. It was noted that the revised Petitions Scheme had been approved by Council on 3 November 2021, and although it was no longer mandatory for Local Authorities to have a statutory petitions scheme, it was still considered good practice.

The Democratic Services and Systems Manager added that all petitions submitted to the Council were received and monitored by Democratic Services and dealt with in line with the petitions scheme and thresholds for dealing with petitions as detailed in section 3 of the report. Appendix 1 to the report detailed the date a petition was received, issues raised, number of valid signatures, lead officer responsible, and the status and action taken for each petition.

Councillor Rita Potter moved the recommendations within the report. Councillor Milkinder Jaspal seconded the recommendations.

The report was debated by Committee.

The Committee requested that in future reports any ongoing actions also be detailed and the date petitions were closed.

The Chief Operating Officer responded to questions asked and it was agreed that future reports on the schedule of petitions would include the 'end date' for cases that had been closed.

Resolved:

1. That the actions taken in relation to all petitions received by the Council during the last year be noted.

6 **Update on Preparations for May 2024 Combined Authority Mayoral and Local Elections**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the report: Update on Preparations for May 2024 Combined Authority Mayoral and Local Elections. The report provided an update on preparations underway for the elections taking place on Thursday 2 May 2024.

The Chief Operating Officer noted that at present the elections confirmed as taking place were twenty City Council seats and the Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority; however, subject to Parliamentary procedures, there may also be a West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner Election and a General Election.

Laura Noonan, Electoral Services and Scrutiny Manager, outlined the report and highlighted significant points. She noted that the Voter ID drop-in session at Pendeford Library would start at 1pm not 12pm as stated in the report and that these details had been updated on the council website.

Councillor Rita Potter moved the recommendations within the report. Councillor Milkinder Jaspal seconded the recommendations.

The report was considered by Committee, and the Electoral Services and Scrutiny Manager and Chief Operating Officer responded to questions asked.

Members were reminded of the new arrangements regarding postal votes, and it was agreed that all public communications regarding the elections process would be shared with Councillors.

Resolved:

1. That the preparations underway for the forthcoming elections be noted.

7 **Councillor Handbook and Induction Programme 2024**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the Councillor Handbook and Induction Programme 2024 report for approval. The new Councillor Induction Programme 2024 was detailed in appendix 1 to the report, and the the Councillor Handbook 2024 was detailed at appendix 2.

Laura Gittos, Head of Governance, outlined the report and highlighted significant points. It was noted that an updated version of the handbook would be produced following the election and circulated to members accordingly.

Councillor Milkinder Jaspal left the meeting.

Key improvements to the Induction Programme were outlined, including the introduction of hybrid training sessions, and the Head of Governance welcomed feedback from members.

Councillor Rita Potter moved the recommendations within the report. Councillor Anwen Muston seconded the recommendations.

The report was considered by Committee, and the Head of Governance responded to questions asked.

A member of the Committee highlighted the importance of safety at work, and it was agreed that details of the New Employee Assistance Programme would be circulated to serving councillors every quarter via the weekly councillor email and would be prominently displayed within the new Councillor Handbook.

Resolved:

1. That the City of Wolverhampton Councillor Handbook 2024-2025 as detailed in Appendix 1 be approved.
2. That the City of Wolverhampton Councillor Induction Programme 2024-2025 as detailed in Appendix 2 be approved.

8 **Councillor Development Programme 2024-2025**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the Councillor Development Programme 2024-2025 report for approval. The report provided an overview of the Councillor Development Programme 2024–2025, which included in-house courses, mandatory training requirements, and additional courses and webinars available by the Local Government Association (LGA). The report also highlighted a

recommended process for the approval of Councillor requests for external courses and conferences that had an associated cost.

Chloe Elwell, Organisational Development Advisor, outlined the report and highlighted significant points.

Councillor Rita Potter moved the recommendations within the report. Councillor Anwen Muston seconded the recommendations.

The report was considered by Committee, and the Organisational Development Advisor responded to questions asked.

Resolved:

1. That the proposed Councillor Development Programme 2024–2025 be endorsed.
2. That it be noted that the Councillor Development Programme 2024–2025 may change or develop as the year progressed dependent on additional learning needs that may arise.

9

Code of Conduct for Councillors - Annual Report 2023

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, outlined the Code of Conduct for Councillors Annual Report 2023, and highlighted key points. The report provided an overview of the operation and promotion of the Council's member code of conduct and associated arrangements during the 2023-2024 calendar year. A breakdown of the complaints considered by the Monitoring Officer during 2023 was detailed in appendix 1 to the report.

Surjit Tour, Deputy Director of Governance, outlined the Code of Conduct training and encouraged members to attend the session if they hadn't already done so.

The report was considered by Committee.

The Chief Operating Officer responded to questions asked, and to ensure the necessary support was in place for members, it was agreed that the Employee Assistance Programme would be built into the complaints process.

Councillor Rita Potter moved the recommendations within the report. Councillor Anwen Muston seconded the recommendations.

Resolved:

1. That the annual report addressing the promotion, operation, and monitoring of the members' code of conduct be noted.
2. That the complaints about members received and considered by the Monitoring Officer during 2023 be noted.
3. That any comments or recommendations about the process for managing complaints or any other relevant matters be made.