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CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
C O U N C I L

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Governance and Ethics Committee
Minutes - 14 January 2022

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Attendance

Members of the Governance and Ethics Committee

Cllr John Reynolds (Chair)
Cllr Jonathan Crofts (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Dr Paul John Birch J.P.
Cllr Claire Darke (Virtual)
Cllr Celia Hibbert
Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Sandra Samuels OBE
Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Ellis Turrell (Substitute)

Employees

David Pattison	Chief Operating Officer
Laura Noonan	Electoral Services Manager
Laura Gittos (Virtual)	Head of Governance
Jas Kaur	Democratic Services Manager
Donna Cope	Democratic Services Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No.   Title

1   **Apologies for absence**
       Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Simon Bennett.

       Councillor Ellis Turrell attended the meeting as a substitute member for Councillor
       Bennett.

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 10 December 2021 be approved as
       a correct record.

4   **Matters arising**
       There were no matters arising.

5   **Preparations for May 2022 Local Elections**
        David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the report on Preparations for
        May 2022 Local Elections. The report outlined the provisions that were underway for
        the local elections taking place on 5 May 2022 and Members were encouraged to
        provide feedback on the arrangements. It was noted that a follow up evaluation
        report would be presented to Committee after the elections had taken place.

        Laura Noonan, Electoral Services Manager, provided an overview of the key
        preparations that were underway and advised Members that a further update would
        be presented to Committee in March.

        It was noted that a candidate and agents briefing would be held on 7 March 2022
        and that invites had been sent to all Councillors.

        The report was debated by Committee and it was agreed that Electoral Services
        would liaise with Councillors to ensure, were possible, schools would not be closed
        unnecessarily and used as polling stations.

        Councillor John Reynolds moved the recommendation in the report. Councillor
        Jonathan Crofts seconded the recommendation.

        Resolved:
            1. That the preparations underway for the May 2022 elections be noted.

6   **Local Election Fees and Charges 2022-2023**
        David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, presented the report on Local Election Fees
        and Charges 2022-2023. The report outlined the proposed schedule of fees and
        charges relating to Local Elections for May 2022 and outlined the rationale behind
        the proposals.

        The Chief Operating Officer explained how the local election budget was managed
        and reported that any costs in excess of the agreed budget would be funded from the
        Elections Reserve and would eventually balance out over the four year period.

        The report was debated by Committee and it was agreed that Members would
        receive a breakdown of the costs for each type of election.

        Resolved:
            1. That the proposed schedule of fees for May 2022 as shown in Appendix 1 be
                approved.

7   **Evaluation of 2021 Annual Canvass**
        Laura Noonan, Electoral Services Manager, presented the report on the Evaluation
        of 2021 Annual Canvass. The report outlined the key findings of the canvass and
        discussed the methodology used when gathering the data. Areas for improvement
        were identified but the Electoral Services Manager confirmed that the overall results
        were pleasing.

        The report was debated by Committee, and the Electoral Services Manager assured
        members that areas of concern, such as care homes and houses of multiple
        occupation, were being addressed.

During further discussions, it was agreed that Councillor Milkinder Jaspal would be provided with canvassing data for each individual ward, and data protection information in relation to canvassing.

Councillor John Reynolds moved the recommendation in the report. Councillor Jonathan Crofts seconded the recommendation.

Resolved:
1. That the evaluation on the 2021 annual canvass be noted.

8   **Update from Monitoring Officer**
David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, provided an update on the work programme and other matters within the scope of the Governance and Ethics Committee's remit.

The Chief Operating Officer noted that whilst it had been proposed to bring the Code of Conduct Annual Report to the meeting on 14 January 2022 it had not been possible due to preparations for the Independent Remuneration Panel review of allowances and other urgent matters.
The report would therefore be brought to the next meeting of the Committee or if it could be arranged, an additional meeting prior to 18 February 2022.

The Chief Operating Officer noted that an embargoed version of the final recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was expected on 14 January 2022, and the public version would be received on 18 January 2022. Both versions of the report would be circulated to councillors when received, and a full report would be brought to next meeting.

The Chief Operating Officer noted that the Councillor Enquiries Unit (CEU) was now fully in operation and all recruitment had been completed. Processes, particularly ICT processes, were being improved and Councillors had been invited to take part in these developments in order to ensure the CEU was fit was purpose. 90% of CEU cases were closed, 5% were open, and 5% were overdue. The majority of overdue cases were due to front line staff shortages because of Covid-19 and should improve over time.

The update from the Monitoring Officer was debated by Committee, and the Chief Operating Officer responded to questions asked.

Resolved:
1. That the update from the Monitoring Officer be noted.

9   **Annual Report on Code of Conduct Matters**
This item was deferred to the next meeting.

10   **Changes to the Constitution**
This item was deferred to the next meeting.

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