

Governance and Ethics Committee

Minutes - 22 February 2024

Attendance

Members of the Governance and Ethics Committee

Cllr Rita Potter (Chair)
Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal
Cllr Lovinyer Daley
Cllr Paul Brookfield
Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Susan Roberts MBE
Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Jonathan Crofts
Cllr Sally Green

Employees

David Pattison	Chief Operating Officer
Surjit Tour	Deputy Director of Governance
Laura Noonan	Electoral Services & Scrutiny 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 Rohit Mistry and Councillor Anwen Muston.

Councillor Sally Green attended as a substitute for Councillor Muston.
- 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 11 January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

4 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

5 **Cross Boundary Election Protocol**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the report: Cross Boundary Election Protocol. The report outlined the rationale for a cross boundary parliamentary protocol agreement and the agreed roles and responsibilities of Wolverhampton and Walsall Acting Returning Officer's for a Parliamentary election.

Laura Noonan, Electoral Services Manager, outlined the report and highlighted significant points within the Protocol. She summarised the key responsibilities of each Acting Returning Officer (ARO) and the rationale behind these arrangements.

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

The report was considered by Committee, and Councillor Wendy Thompson commended officers for their hard work and planning on such a complicated matter.

Resolved:

1. That the Cross Boundary Election Protocol be noted.

6 **Code of Conduct Annual Report**

Resolved:

1. That the item be deferred to a future meeting.

7 **Municipal Calendar of Meetings 2024-2025**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, outlined the report: Municipal Calendar of Meetings 2024-2025. The annual report outlined the proposed timetable for Council and committee meetings for the next Council Municipal Year (2024-2025).

The Chief Operating Officer highlighted the following key changes and welcomed feedback from members:

1. That the annual Budget Council meeting would start at the earlier time of 4pm.
2. That the Councillor Development Advisory Group would be stood down, and matters considered by that group would be covered by the Governance and Ethics Committee instead.

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

The report was considered by Committee, and it was queried whether the other Advisory Groups could also be stood down and incorporated into other meetings. The Chief Operating Officer responded to comments made and agreed to discuss the matter again with the relevant Cabinet Members.

Resolved:

1. That Council be recommended to approve the City of Wolverhampton Council Municipal Calendar of Meetings for 2024-2025.

2. That consultation with the political groups on the City of Wolverhampton Council Municipal Calendar of Meetings for 2024-2025 be approved.
3. That any amendments to the City of Wolverhampton Council Calendar of Meetings for 2024-2025 be delegated to the Chair of Governance and Ethics Committee in consultation with the Chief Operating Officer following consultation with political groups.

8 **Best Value Standards and Intervention Guidance**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, outlined the report: Best Value Standards and Intervention Guidance. The report outlined the new draft statutory guidance on Best Value for local authorities and demonstrated how the Council was meeting its Best Value duty against that new guidance.

The draft guidance set out what was expected of local government in order to deliver best value and provided the 'characteristics' of a well-functioning local authority.

A detailed self-assessment exercise had been undertaken with officers to benchmark the council against the characteristics outlined in the guidance. The self-assessment included details as to why the Council believed it met the requirements of the Government's draft guidance and the work being undertaken by the Council.

The Chief Operating Officer outlined the self-assessment in detail and noted that a further report would be brought back to Committee once the final draft had been released.

The report was considered by Committee, and the Chief Operating Officer responded to comments made.

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

Resolved:

1. That it be noted that Government had released new draft statutory guidance for local authorities on the Best Value Duty
2. That members reviewed and commented on the self-assessment undertaken to benchmark the City of Wolverhampton Council's performance against the new draft guidance.
3. That it be agreed that members received future reports once Government had published the final guidance.

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