

Governance & Ethics Committee

9 September 2021

Report title	Update from the Monitoring Officer on Governance Matters	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Paula Brookfield Cabinet Member for Governance	
Accountable director	David Pattison: Monitoring Officer	
Originating service	Governance	
Accountable employee	David Pattison Tel Email	Director of Governance 01902 553 840 David.Pattison@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report has been considered by	Not applicable.	

Recommendation for action:

The Governance and Ethics Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the report and provide any feedback on the report.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update on the work programme and other matters within the scope of the Governance and Ethics Committee's remit. The work programme was approved by the Committee at its meeting in July 2021.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Council's constitution sets out the remit of the Committee below:

The Governance and Ethics Committee will have responsibility for the following functions which are reserved to it:

The Governance and Ethics Committee will have the following Terms of Reference:

- a. Shall be an advisory body, comprising Councillors, dealing with governance, ethics and constitutional arrangements;*
- b. Shall, where appropriate, consider and advise the Council on matters relating to the Council's governance and Constitution, including standards of conduct, the timetable of meetings, the administrative and procedural arrangements for implementing new legislation and the terms of reference of or scheme of delegation to Council bodies;*
- c. Shall consider and advise the Council on elections and electoral arrangements, including boundary reviews, and polling districts, places and stations, where these are not the sole responsibility of the Returning Officer;*
- d. Be consulted, and may offer feedback for consideration, on elections and electoral arrangements that are the sole responsibility of the Returning Office;*
- e. Shall advise Full Council on the adoption or revision of the Councillors' Code of Conduct and Councillors' Allowances Scheme;*
- f. Shall liaise between the Council and the Ombudsman;*
- g. Shall advise the Council on the conferment of the title of Honorary Alderman or Freedom of the City;*
- h. Shall advise the Council on the making, amendment, revocation or re-enactment of bylaws and the promotion of or opposition to local or personal Bills in Parliament;*
- i. Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Elected Members and co-opted Members;*
- j. Making recommendations to the Council on the appointment of "independent persons" under the Localism Act 2011;*

k. Approving and revising the Complaints Protocol which will set out the detailed procedures for considering complaints made against Elected and Co-opted Members under the Code of Conduct for Elected and Co-opted Members;

l. Considering complaints made against Elected and Co-opted Members under the Code of Conduct for Elected and Co-opted Members in accordance with the Complaints Protocol;

m. Monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct for Elected and Co-opted Members and making appropriate recommendations to the relevant body;

n. At the request of the member or co-opted member concerned, reviewing any decision of the Monitoring Officer not to grant a dispensation in relation to disclosable pecuniary interests in accordance with Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011;

o. Monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct for Employees and making appropriate recommendations to the relevant body;

p. Considering any other matters which are relevant to the ethical governance of the Council, its Members or Employees.

Governance and Ethics (Hearings) Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee shall conduct hearings into allegations that a Councillor has breached the Code of Conduct for Councillors of the relevant authority in accordance with the arrangements for such hearings approved by the Council.

2.2 The agreed work programme for the year for the Committee is as follows:

Governance Committee Forward Plan for the 2020-2021 Municipal Year			
Date of Meeting	Title of Report	Lead Officer	Status/Publication date
3 September 2021	Proposed reaction to the LGBCE consultation	Laura Noonan/David Pattison	On the agenda
	Regular Monitoring Officer Update	David Pattison	On the agenda
	Electoral Cycle report	David Pattison	Additional item – on the agenda
	Further revisions to the Constitution	David Pattison	Deferred to October meeting
	Petitions	Jas Kaur	Deferred to October meeting

	Alderman	Jas Kaur	On the agenda
22 October 2021	Regular Monitoring Officer update Proposed review of current Councillor Allowance scheme – expires in May 2022 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report	David Pattison David Pattison David Pattison	14 October 2021
19 November 2021	Regular Monitoring Officer update Report on implementation of the LGBCE review Review of the Corporate Code of Governance	David Pattison David Pattison David Pattison	11 November 2021
14 January 2022	Regular Monitoring Officer update Election preparation update	David Pattison David Pattison	6 January 2022
18 February 2022	Regular Monitoring Officer update Constitution review	David Pattison David Pattison	10 February 2022
25 March 2022	Regular Monitoring Officer update Election update	David Pattison David Pattison	17 March 2022

- 2.3 This report provides an update on issues coming to the Committee and any developing issues within the scope of the Committee and if they take place after the publication of the report a verbal update will be given. As always, if members of the Committee wish for other items to be added they should speak to the Chair of the Committee.

3.0 Update on position

- 3.1 **Elections update** - a detailed update report on the May 2021 elections went to the July meeting of the Committee.
- 3.2 Currently the annual canvass is underway. As of 23 August 2021, all properties in Wolverhampton have received at least one canvass communication and the overall canvass completion rate is 86%. The target is to get to over 90% as the overall canvass completion rate for the 2020 canvass was 89% without being able to do a personal canvass.
- 3.3 Following the data match, 80% of properties (92,230) were allocated to route 1 as they matched with national/local data matching indicating no change. All of these properties have been contacted via email or a letter in the post. They only need to respond if there is a change. 3,824 (4%) of these properties responded to make a change.
- 3.4 20% (23,923) of properties were allocated to route 2 as the data match indicated a change in household composition. A canvass letter was posted to these properties on 19 July with the response deadline date as 20 August. 7,469 (32%) properties have responded to this communication. The vast majority (81%) of these have responded online. Non-responding properties with a contact number will be contacted via telephone by customer services staff during September. A canvass form with a pre-paid envelope will be posted to all non-responding properties without a contact number on 8 September. Canvassers will be employed in October to follow up any outstanding properties. Appropriate risk assessments and PPE will be put in place.
- 3.5 **Local Government Boundary Commission for England Review** – as the Committee is aware, the Commission is currently undertaking a review of the electoral arrangements for the Council. This has been the subject of a number of reports to the Committee including a detailed report to this meeting, The Commission's website for our review can be seen [here](#).
- 3.6 **Constitution revisions** – as the Committee is aware, a review of the Constitution is underway with a number of changes made at the Annual meeting of Council on 19 May 2021 and at the meeting of Council on 21 July 2021. Further changes will be brought forward shortly to the officer delegations in part 3; these will come to the Committee meeting in October. We are keen to ensure that the review of the Constitution takes place on a regular basis so that it can be kept up to date.
- 4.0 Financial implications**
- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report as the Governance and Ethics Committee is simply asked to note the update and provide any feedback. [CN/25082021/U]
- 5.0 Legal implications**
- 5.1 This is simply an update report and no substantive decisions are made through it so there are no legal implications as such. [DP/25082021/C].

6.0 All Other Implications

6.1 There are no other implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

7.0 Schedule of background papers

7.1 None

8.0 Appendices

8.1 None.