

MINUTES OF MEMBER AND OFFICER WORKING TASK GROUP

16 JUNE 2022

PRESENT:

Members of the Task Group: Councillors Rabin (Chair), Mrs Garcia, Lewis and Mrs Maoudis

Officers: Aftab Razzaq (Chief Officer – Legal and Governance), Claire Waleczek (Democratic and Support Services Manager) and Linn Ashmore (Democratic Services Officer)

7. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2022 were approved.

8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence from the meeting was received from Councillor Mrs O'Rourke.

9. DRAFT MEMBER AND OFFICER WORKING PROTOCOL

The draft protocol, previously circulated by email, was presented to the task group by the Chief Officer for Legal and Governance. The task group viewed the protocol online and discussed the content in detail. During the discussion the following points were made:

- The protocol was designed as an umbrella document and further detail, or separate underlying documents may be required.
- It was noted the illustrations used in the document were subject to copyright and permission for their use was being sought. The illustrations used were visually good and descriptive of the topics they related to. Some changes to the images were requested that would make the document more relevant to Rugby.
- Mutual respect between councillors was also important and this should be included.
- There were a number of elements within the protocol aimed at creating an enhanced relationship between officers and Members, including Member profiles and councillor open days.
- An officer profile would be useful for Members. It was noted that the introduction of Councillor Liaison Officers would provide an alternative communication channel for Members.
- The channels for communication should be specified.
- The new centralised case management system was welcomed and would be a great help to Members.
- Member conversations were very informative. Members discussed the timing of these and whether they should be held on an as required basis or whether a structured schedule was required. Member conversations were most beneficial when they were timely and about topics on the horizon that would affect the Council or the Borough, rather than organising regular meetings.

- It was decided that matters of interest and common queries being asked by residents that could be possible topics for member conversations should be raised through group leaders and fed back to senior officers. It was important to be reactive to what was taking place and providing key updates, and this would be difficult to schedule in advance.
- The Forward Plan was the appropriate tool for identifying future topics due to be reported to Cabinet or Council.
- The Scrutiny Committee invited portfolio holders to its meetings to discuss performance, update Members on their portfolio areas and answer questions.
- It was important that the processes outlined in the new protocol become embedded into everyday work practices and continued to be managed on an ongoing basis. Workshops held after the launch of the protocol with officers and Members would help support this.
- A councillor open day would be a good opportunity to launch the protocol. This could be followed by the workshops with officers.
- Some of the tools outlined in the protocol to facilitate strong collaboration between officer and Members were similar to past practices. The creation of a protocol allowed for a review and refresh of the ways of working.
- Officers would review best practices that had been included in the induction programme in the past.
- The involvement of councillors on matters that affect their wards was very important.
- The relationship with Warwickshire County Councillors was not as successful as it could be. Aiming for the best possible relationship between county and borough councillors would allow for the sharing of valuable information.
- At Member Briefings it was important that officers were clear on what was or was not confidential information.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) officers would liaise with the Communication and Information Team to review and modify the illustrations in the draft protocol;
- (2) information on the framework in place for decision making and ways Members were kept informed of key milestones and portfolio matters be included;
- (3) wording about mutual respect between councillors be included at page 3.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that no further meetings were required. The draft protocol would be updated based on the outcomes of this meeting and circulated to the task group in advance of it being presented to Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 18 July and Council on 19 July.

CHAIR