

Responses to Scrutiny Review Recommendations

Report to Overview Committee

Title of the review: Gedling Councillor Standard

Date review completed: 19 March 2018

Date Presented to Cabinet: 3 May 2018

Portfolio Holder: Councillor

Review group members: Councillors Adams, Barnfather, Paling, Parr

Officer supporting the review: Lyndsey Parnell

Response due to the Overview Committee (28 days): 23 June 2018

Guidance

The final report and recommendations from the above review have been considered by Cabinet and a written response to the recommendations from the responsible Cabinet Member to the Overview Committee is required within twenty eight days of the date the review was presented to Cabinet.

If you need any further assistance in completing this response please contact the Officer that supported the review

Recommendation 1

That the job description provided as part of the Members Induction Pack be provided to prospective candidates and/or form part of our information online regarding how to become a Councillor.

To be completed after the report has been presented to Cabinet

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted Partly accepted Do not accept

The current version of the job description is being reviewed to ensure that it is up to date and officers do plan to issue it to prospective candidates as soon as they become nominated.

It is also important to note that political parties have a responsibility to brief their candidates about the realities of life as a councillor as part of the selection process.

Recommendation 2

That SLT hold a Member briefing for all Members on at least a yearly basis to communicate the visions, values and position of the Council.

Part 1 – to be completed after the report has been presented to Cabinet

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted Partly Accepted Do not accept

The vision and values of the Council are contained within the Gedling Plan which is approved by full Council along with the annual budget.

Quarterly and year end performance reports are provided to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee. The reports include a general overview of the status of agreed actions and indicators, details of particularly good performance, areas of concern and achievements. In addition, all Members are given access to detailed performance information. It is therefore considered that comprehensive data is available to all Members to enable them to understand the vision, values and position of the Council.

Recommendation 3

That Group Leaders be invited to address Officers at a staff briefing to increase understanding of the role of Elected Members.

Part 1 – to be completed after the report has been presented to Cabinet

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted Partly Accepted Do not accept

The recommendation is supported in principle and arrangements will be made for Group Leaders to address officers at staff briefings after the May 2019 elections.

Recommendation 4

That the Member/Officer relationship be reviewed to consider how to better communicate with and respond to Members.

Part 1 – to be completed after the report has been presented to Cabinet

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted Partly Accepted Do not accept

In order to address any issues relating to the lack of response in a timely fashion (or at all) to councillor enquiries, a Councillor enquiries/casework system has been launched. This system will enable Councillor correspondence to be monitored by Democratic Services.

In addition, Officers plan to review the Constitution and as part of that work will review the Member/Officer Protocol with reference to LGA guidance.

Recommendation 5

That arrangements be made to give Members the opportunity to shadow within key departments to gain understanding of the work of the Council and foster better relationships with Officers.

Part 1 – to be completed after the report has been presented to Cabinet

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted Partly Accepted Do not accept

The opportunity to shadow officers within key departments has already been offered to Councillors as part of the induction process and more recently during Customer Services week and there are several examples where this offer has been taken up.

Any Councillor can approach Democratic Services at any time to arrange to shadow but this will be offered on a more formal basis as part of the induction programme following the election in May 2019.

Recommendation 6

That there be a process for communicating any concerns regarding Member conduct, that is not in breach of the Code of Conduct, to Group Leaders or Business Managers.

Part 1 – to be completed after the report has been presented to Cabinet

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted Partly Accepted Do not accept

There may be instances where the conduct of a Councillor falls short of a breach of the Code of Conduct but falls within the scope of the Protocol on Member / Officer relations. The Protocol already includes the following:

“If an officer feels this protocol has been breached they should discuss their concerns with the Chief Executive and/or Monitoring Officer. As far as possible there should be an informal resolution to the concerns by discussion with the relevant Member(s) and Group Leader(s).”

Scrutiny Committee should also note that the Monitoring Officer is aware that on occasion complaints about member conduct are directed to the Group Leader/Business Manager rather than a formal code of conduct complaint being made.

Recommendation 6

That Officers be encouraged to keep wider Members better informed through briefing notes and information emails, rather than taking information reports and presentations through Cabinet.

Part 1 – to be completed after the report has been presented to Cabinet

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted Partly Accepted Do not accept

The purpose of information reports and presentations to Cabinet is to ensure that Cabinet is briefed on executive matters for which they are responsible. Such information items and presentations will continue if Cabinet need to be aware of them. All Members receive an electronic copy of Cabinet reports and if they feel that they would benefit from the information presented to Cabinet, they can attend the Cabinet meetings. In addition, if the Leader/Deputy or Leader of the Opposition consider that the information should be shared more widely, Officers can present to this wider audience.

Democratic Services used to organise a rolling programme of briefing sessions for Councillors but stopped due to lack of interest and low attendance. Newsletters were also prepared and circulated on a regular basis, but ceased due to the reduction in officer resources. Unfortunately due to continuing budget reductions and capacity issues across the council these cannot be re-introduced.

However Officers are encouraged to provide briefing notes to all Members on an ad hoc basis in relation to significant items/changes in legislation. In addition, Councillors have the opportunity to be better informed for example through regular staff E-GEN alerts, Keep me Posted and the Contacts magazine.

Officers are currently exploring opportunities to create a Councillor intranet to coincide with the election in May 2019.

Any Councillor can approach Democratic Services at any time to suggest information/briefing items which would be of use to the wider audience. The Democratic Services team is always happy to discuss gaps in knowledge and ideas for training from any councillor.