



Standards Committee

Tuesday, 6 February 2024

Review of the Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations

Report of the Monitoring Officer

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. This report provides Standards Committee with an update on the operation and efficacy of the Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations, referred to in this report as 'the Protocol'. It also considers current awareness of the Protocol by Councillors and Officers and makes recommendations to raise and improve upon this if needed.
- 1.2. Standards Committee are required to review the Protocol at least once every four years to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Standards Committee:

- a) Agrees that the Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations remains fit for purpose
- b) Endorse and provide feedback on the proposed creation of a training resource for Councillors and Officers to promote and maintain effective relations.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The Protocol requires review by Standards Committee after the first year and subsequently every four years, or as required. In reality, a review of the entire Constitution, of which the Protocol forms part, is undertaken at least annually, however no changes have been made to the Protocol specifically since its adoption.
- 3.2. It is considered timely, following the Corporate Peer Challenge in January 2024, to revisit the Protocol to ensure that Councillors and Officers are satisfied that it remains fit for purpose. In addition, it is considered appropriate to design a training resource specifically in relation to the Protocol to ensure that all Councillors and Officers can be confident that they are aware of its content and application.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. As set out in the third report by the Committee on Standards in Public Life:
- “Every local authority should have its own written statement or protocol governing relations between members and officers”.
- 4.2. The Protocol itself provides that:
- “Rushcliffe Borough Council recognises that the relationship between its Councillors and its officers is of vital importance in its work on behalf of the people of the Borough. The Council believes that a public statement of rules and guidance on this relationship demonstrates its commitment to act with integrity and helps both Councillors and Officers in carrying out their different but interrelated duties. This Protocol forms part of the Borough Council’s Constitution and has been approved by its Standards Committee. It builds on the Council’s Codes of Conduct for Councillors and Officers and should be read in conjunction with them”.
- 4.3. A copy of the current version of the Protocol is appended to this report.
- 4.4. The Monitoring Officer has reviewed the current version of the Protocol. It aligns with the existing Code of Conduct which is itself based upon the LGA Model Code of Conduct, and it is not considered that any specific amendments are required at this time. However, should a revised Code of Conduct for Councillors be adopted by full Council, a further review of the Protocol would be undertaken to ensure it aligns with the revised Code.
- 4.5. The Member induction programme, which was last rolled out following the election in May 2023, included a session dealing with conduct and ethical standards issues which included reference to the Protocol. In addition, the induction for Officers refers new staff to the employee code of conduct which in turn makes reference to the Protocol. Political awareness training has also previously been rolled out to officers. However, it is considered that there would be benefit in providing a training session specifically targeted at providing greater clarity around the roles of Councillors and Officers.
- 4.6. The Local Government Association have produced a Councillor workbook resource entitled ‘Effective member and officer relations’. It is proposed that the Monitoring Officer use this as a basis for creating a training session which can be undertaken by both Councillors and Officers to assist both in understanding each other’s roles and how best to assist each other to achieve the best outcomes for our residents.

5. Risks and Uncertainties

- 5.1. Failure to review the Protocol in accordance with its terms could mean it becomes out of date and ineffective. Failure to ensure that both Councillors and Officers are aware of, and act in accordance with, the Protocol could have a detrimental impact on the way in which parties work together to achieve the Council’s priorities and have a negative reputational impact.

5.2. Regular review, and training on the Protocol should negate the risks outlined above.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications.

6.2. Legal Implications

This committee is responsible for maintaining high governance standards within the Council pursuant to its duties under the Localism Act 2011. An up to date and effective Protocol on Councillor/Officer relations is imperative to the maintenance of those standards.

6.3. Equalities Implications

Consideration of the Council's Equality Scheme has been given to the review of the Protocol.

6.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no Section 17 implications.

6.5. Biodiversity Net Gain Implications

There are no Biodiversity Net Gain Implications.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	Having an up to date and effective Protocol on Councillor/Officer relations supports the delivery of all the Council's corporate priorities.
Quality of Life	
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	

8. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that Standards Committee:

- a) Agrees that the protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations remains fit for purpose
- b) Endorse and provide feedback on the proposed creation of a training resource for Councillors and Officers to promote and maintain effective Councillor and Officer relations.

For more information contact:	Gemma Dennis Monitoring Officer gdennis@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1: Protocol on Councillor/Officer relations Appendix 2: Effective member and officer relations – Councillor workbook (Local Government Association publication)