

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 13 April 2017

Members Present:

Councillor G Duggins (Cabinet Member)
Councillor J Blundell (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees (by Directorate):

| | |
|--------|---------------------------------------|
| Place | A Mitchell, M Rose, L Stockin, A West |
| People | J Sansom |

Public Business

6. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared.

7. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th July 2016 were agreed and signed as a true record.

8. Code of Corporate Governance

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place), which proposed the introduction of a new Code of Corporate Governance and review process for the City Council in line with the principles and best practice set out in the national framework.

Coventry City Council first introduced a Code of Corporate Governance in 2009 based on best practice at the time. The context in which local government operated had changed significantly since then including a period of significant financial challenge, the growing devolution agenda and the introduction of a wide range of legislation that had brought new roles, responsibilities and opportunities for collaboration with a wider range of partners.

In 2016, the Chartered Institute of Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) updated their guidance on Corporate Governance and published the new *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework*. This provided a best practice framework for local authorities to help make sure that their resources were directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities, that there was sound and inclusive decision-making and that there was clear accountability for the use of those resources in order to achieve the desired outcomes for service users and communities. It set out the principles that underpinned good governance and how local authorities could assure themselves and others that they were meeting them.

The Cabinet Member noted that the Audit and Procurement Committee approve the annual governance statement and the views of the Committee were sought as part of the preparation of this Code. The Committee considered a draft of the proposed Code at its meeting on 3rd April 2017 and supported the approach. They stressed the importance of ensuring that the proposed review process was robust in order that the Council could assess itself effectively against both the principles of the Code and the best practice identified in the national framework. They sought assurance about how the review cycle would operate to identify gaps and deliver improvement and how progress would be reported and monitored.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership approve the Code of Corporate Governance attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

9. **Review of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place), which proposed a revised Whistleblowing Policy for the Council following a review.

The report indicated that the Council was not required by law to have a Whistleblowing Policy. However, it was recommended in government guidance and by Public Concern at Work that employers should, as a matter of best practice, have a Whistleblowing Policy as it showed the employer's commitment to listening to concerns and addressing them appropriately. Such a policy helped to foster an open culture where employees were encouraged to report concerns. It was best practice to have a Whistleblowing Policy in order to maintain high standards of openness and accountability and to encourage those with concerns to raise them using the policy.

Whistleblowing legislation was governed by the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998). This legislation provided that certain individuals (employees, workers, agency workers) were protected from suffering any detriment i.e. any disadvantage because he/she had made a protected disclosure.

Under the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 a disclosure was only a protected disclosure if the individual reasonably believed that the disclosure was in the public interest and that it related to one of the prescribed categories as specified under paragraph 7 of the draft policy, which was attached at appendix 2 of the report.

One of the key concerns raised in the Rotherham report was that the Whistleblowing Policy was inadequate and did not provide adequate protection to whistle-blowers. The review of the City Council's policy sought to address these concerns through the use of safeguards and protections for individuals.

The Whistleblowing Policy was reviewed in order to ensure that it was fit for purpose and complied with the legislative requirements.

The report also indicated that Local Authority schools should review their Whistleblowing Policy in light of the Council's review and update their policy where appropriate. The Council would liaise the governing bodies to ensure that they were aware of the amendments made.

The Cabinet Member noted that the report had also been considered by the Ethics Committee at its meeting on 17th March 2017 and the Audit and Procurement Committee at its meeting on 3rd April 2017. Both were supportive of the revised Policy.

RESOLVED that, having considered the comments of the Ethics Committee and the Audit and Procurement Committee, the Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership approve the revised Whistleblowing Policy attached at Appendix 2 of the report.

10. **Information Management Strategy Update - Information Risk Policy**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, which sought approval of the Information Risk Policy.

The Council's Information Management Strategy was approved by Cabinet in March 2016. It was acknowledged that Information Management was becoming increasingly critical to the way the public sector did business as it integrated services, sought to gain better outcomes with fewer resources and digitalised the way services were delivered. Information was one of the authority's greatest assets and its usage was a major responsibility. Coventry City Council were ambitious to be a Council that was trusted by its citizens and customers to manage and protect their information. The Information Management Strategy would ensure that the Council exploited information as a strategic asset, using recognised best practice, legislation and technology to minimise requests for information and maximise the opportunities for information intelligence to share future services and evaluate the effectiveness of existing ones.

One of the work streams within the strategy related to information governance and data protection. In order to understand the level of maturity and assurance in relation to information governance across the organisation, the Council arranged for the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to conduct a data protection audit. Information Management specialists (In-Form Consult) were also engaged to conduct a Council wide maturity assessment. These exercises had helped formulate action plans for the Council to improve its information management arrangements.

Updates on these action plans were shared with Audit and Procurement Committee and the Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership in July 2016; October 2016, and February 2017. The most recent report highlighted that of the 77 recommendations proposed by the Information Commissioner's Office, 75 had been completed, with the remaining 2 requiring final approval. These final actions related to the creation of an Information Risk Policy and Information Risk Register. The report submitted presented the draft Information Risk Policy for approval.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership approves the Information Risk Policy.

11. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

12. **Any Other Items of Public Business**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 2.10 pm)