

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Ethics Committee held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 30
September 2021

Present:

Members: Councillor S Walsh (Chair)

Councillor P Hetherton
Councillor J Mutton
Councillor D Welsh

Other Members present: Councillor R Brown, Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources (for Minute 4 below)

Employees:- S Bennett, Law and Governance
C Bradford, Law and Governance
S Harriott, Law and Governance
J Newman, Director of Law and Governance and
Monitoring Officer
L Sobierski, Human Resources

Independent Persons: A Barton, R Wills and P Wiseman

Apologies: S Atkinson

Public Business

1. Carol Bradford

The Chair, Councillor Walsh, indicated that Carol Bradford, Corporate Governance Lawyer, was attending her last meeting of Ethics Committee before her retirement.

On behalf of the Committee, Councillor Walsh paid tribute for all of the work undertaken by Carol and thanked her for her support and advice. The Committee extended their best wishes to Carol for a long and happy retirement.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March, 2021 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

4. **One Coventry Values Update**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Human Resources which indicated that The Council's People Plan was launched in early 2020 with two of its key aims being:

- To develop, introduce and embed a set of organisational Values for One Coventry which will be incorporated into recruitment, selection and appraisals.
- To develop, a comprehensive Employee Engagement Plan that not only provides a mechanism for a strong employee voice, dialogue from the bottom to the top of the organisation but also celebrates success and achievement.

'One Coventry Values', detailed below, were introduced in January 2021 and have been co-created with the support and input of over 1300 employees across the Council:-

- Open and fair
- Nurture and Develop
- Engage and Empower
- Create and Innovate
- Own and be Accountable
- Value and Respect

The Employee Engagement Plan, which was appended to the report, was launched in June 2021 and provides a framework which demonstrates how the Council will enable employees to have a strong employee voice, how we will build our One Coventry ethos and 'One Coventry Values'.

The Engagement Plan sets out:

- The importance of employee engagement
- The proposed Employee Engagement Plan
- The measures of success
- The proposed timelines

The Engagement Plan includes the following six key areas that will enhance and improve employee engagement across the Council:-

- Purpose, Mission and Values
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Open and Honest Communication
- Leadership and Management Development
- Learning and Development
- Reward and Recognition

The report detailed a number of significant successes and achievements to date which included:-

- Ensuring that there is clarity of purpose of the Council's vision of One Coventry Value and behaviour
- Creating a culture of open and honest communication which provides a mechanism for strong employee voice.

The report also detailed further work that will be undertaken to develop and enhance employee engagement across the organisation.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes and endorses the work undertaken and progress made in embedding the City Council's One Coventry Values.

5. **Annual Report of the Ethics Committee 2020/21**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which set out the work of the Committee over the last municipal year. In particular, the report detailed:-

- Work that the Committee has carried out on developing a new Code of Conduct for Elected and Co-opted Members which was approved by full Council
- A new Travel and Conference Policy produced by the Committee
- Consideration of complaints made under the Code of Conduct

As well as receiving regular reports on ethical standards cases across the country, the Committee has also considered reports on:-

- The result of a rapid non-statutory review into serious governance and risk management issues at Nottingham City Council;
- Steps taken by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government in the wake of arrests in connection with accusations of bribery and witness intimidation at Liverpool City Council.
- The Committee on Standards in Public Life's short report on its review of progress by local authorities against its 15 Best Practice Recommendations for ethical standards.

The Committee has also maintained a watching brief of work being undertaken by the Local Government Association on Civility in Public Life and also on work being done locally on supporting Members in dealing with challenges associated with public life, particularly in relation to intimidation and abuse.

The report also detailed the Work Programme for 2021/22.

The Ethics Committee approved the Annual Report for 2020/21.

RESOLVED that the City Council be recommended to:

- Note the Annual Report of the Ethics Committee for 2020/21**
- Consider whether there is any work within the Committee's terms of reference that Council would wish the Committee to undertake**

6. **Review of the Complaints Protocol**

Further to Minute 33/20, the Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which indicated that, following the adoption of the new Code of Conduct for Elected and Co-opted Members, the Committee decided that it should review the Complaints Protocol in the light of the new Code. The intention was to see if any changes needed to be made to the Protocol.

The report indicated that Officers have reviewed the Protocol and feel that no changes are required as a result of the new Code. A copy of the Complaints Protocol was appended to the report.

The Committee noted that the new Code of Conduct requires Members to cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.

RESOLVED that the Committee confirms that no revisions are required to the Complaints Protocol as a result of the adoption of the new Code of Conduct for Elected and co-opted Members.

7. **Review of Members' and Officers' Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality: 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2021**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance appended to which were details of Members' and Officers' declarations of gifts and hospitality for the period 1 January to 30 June 2021.

The Committee noted that for Members, the threshold above which gifts and hospitality must be declared has risen from £25 to £50.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8. **Code of Conduct Update**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which provided an update on national issues in relation to the ethical behaviour of elected Members and the local position in Coventry with regard to the Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

9. **Work Programme for the Ethics Committee 2021/22**

The Committee received and noted a report of the Director of Law and Governance which detailed a proposed Work Programme for the Committee for 2021/22.

10. **Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business**

There were no items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 10.30 am)