

Governance Working Group

Portfolio	Leader
Ward(s) Affected: n/a	

Purpose

To receive a report from the Governance Working Group and to consider a recommendation relating to the adoption of the new Contract Procedure Rules.

Introduction

1. The Working Group met on 6 December 2013. The notes of this meeting are available on Escene.
2. The Working Group has considered a number of issues and made recommendations which are addressed below.

Contract Procedure Rules

3. The Working Group considered revised Contract Procedure Rules. The revised Procedure Rules addressed a number of ambiguities, in particular in relation to how low value contracts would be handled. The Group was advised that the revised Procedure Rules provided that only 1 quote would be required for purchases under £5,000, whereas previously 3 quotes had been required. In addition, a contract number and full documentation would now only be required for contracts over £50,000. A Purchasing Guide had also been produced which explained in more detail how the Procedure Rules would operate.
4. The Working Group considered circumstances in which the procedures may be waived and how Members would be made aware of any waivers granted. It was agreed to include a paragraph in the Procedure Rules setting out that the Monitoring Officer would inform the relevant Portfolio Holder when a waiver had been granted and that details of any such exemptions would be reported annually to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.
5. The Working Group reviewed the tender opening instructions incorporated in the Procedure Rules and agreed to remove any provisions for opening late tenders.
6. The Working Group was informed that the revised Procedure Rules allowed for an electronic contract portal to be used for tendering. The Group agreed that instructions for managing electronic tenders should be included in the Procedure Rules. These rules have been drafted and are included in the proposed new Contract Procedure Rules attached at Annex A.

Review of the Social Media Protocol for Councillors

7. The Working Group reviewed the Social Media Protocol for Councillors and considered whether guidelines for Members' conduct when using social media were still relevant. It was, however, agreed to retain the existing Protocol as it was felt that it would assist the Standards Hearing and Determination Committee to have guidelines should a matter be referred to the Committee.

8. The Working Group advised the Executive Head of Corporate to make the following minor changes to the Social Media Protocol for Councillors:
 5. Individual councillors are permitted to ~~havewrite~~ their own official **social media sites** ~~blogs~~ as Members of Surrey Heath Borough Council but in these they must conform to the protocols of the Council.

Petitions Scheme

9. The Working Group reviewed the Petitions Scheme in relation to dealing with separate petitions which had similar aims but contained different wording. Having considered this matter it was agreed that a review of the entire Petition Scheme would be undertaken at a future meeting.

Review of the Council's Scrutiny Arrangements

10. When undertaking a review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements in August 2013 the Working Group had considered that further clarity was required regarding the allocation of certain of topics between the scrutiny committees. At its meeting on 6 December 2013 the Group agreed that the topics should be allocated between the committees as follows:
 - Complaints – Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee
 - Equalities – Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee
 - Family Support – External Partnerships Select Committee
 - Social Media – Community Services Scrutiny Committee
11. It was therefore agreed the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the scrutiny committees would be asked to note the allocation of subjects as set out above.
12. The Working Group discussed the reports submitted to scrutiny committees and, whilst it was recognised that items considered by Performance and Audit often necessitated an officer report, it was suggested that the agenda for Community Services should only contain brief outline reports, with the majority of information reported orally at the meeting.
13. The Group also considered the wording of the paragraph relating to overview and scrutiny in the Summary and Explanation in respect of External Partnerships' role as a Select Committee. It was advised that, although External Partnerships was called a select committee, under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 it had responsibility for overview and scrutiny functions. The Working Group considered the paragraph and agreed that no alternative wording would be proposed.

Committee Management System

14. The Working Group also received an update on the introduction of a Committee Managements System, an automated system which would manage the production of forward plans, agendas and minutes. The Group was informed that the introduction of the system produce would progress in early 2014.

Recommendation

15. The Council is advised to RESOLVE that the revised Contract Procedure Rules as attached at Annex A to this report be adopted.

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Annexes	The revised Contract Procedure Rules are attached at Annex A	
Background Papers:	None	
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