

Governance Working Group

Portfolio	Non-executive function
Ward(s) Affected:	n/a

Purpose

To consider recommendations from the Governance Working Group in relation to

- a. The ICT Code of Practice for Members**
- b. Committee Sizes; and**
- c. Minor amendments to the Constitution.**

To note the Governance Working Group's decision in relation to adopting a revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and that the Social Media Protocol for Councillors is under review.

Background

1. The Governance Working Group, at its meeting on 11 January 2019, reviewed
 - a. the ICT Code of Practice for Members;
 - b. the size of the committee memberships;
 - c. a number of proposed minor changes to the Constitution;
 - d. revisions to the Social Media Protocol for Councillors and a new Social Media Guide for Councillors; and
 - e. a revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy;

ICT Code of Practice for Members

2. The Working Group reviewed revisions to the ICT Code of Practice for Councillors, which had included the following changes:
 - (i) a paragraph prohibiting the auto-forwarding of emails to another email account, including to Surrey County Council email addresses;
 - (ii) new sections on data protection to reflect recent legislative changes; and
 - (iii) the inclusion of a sentence reminding Members to write emails in a business-like manner.
3. The Working Group also considered the restriction on councillors using non-council email addresses for council businesses. Whilst the reasons for such restrictions regarding council business and constituency work were supported, it was recognised that in some instances political group work was more appropriately managed through personal email accounts and this provision would need to be treated flexibly.

4. It was also agreed to extend paragraph 8.1 regarding the Council retaining the right to monitor email usage to clarify that this would only take place under the supervision of the Monitoring Officer.
5. The Working Group recommends that the revised ICT Code of Practice for Members, as set out at Annex A to this report, be adopted.

Committee Sizes

6. The Council, at its Annual Meeting in May, will be asked to establish Standing Committees for the 2019/20 municipal year. However, in order to facilitate a smooth process for nominations to committees following the elections, the Working Group was asked to consider making a recommendation on the number of members on each committee, taking into account the reduced Council size from May 2019 onwards.
7. The Working Group reviewed the current committee sizes and supported a reduction of members appointed to the larger committees, in line with the 12.5% reduction in the Council size.
8. The Group considered the size of the Planning Applications Committee. It was noted that the membership of this committee had traditionally allowed for 1 member per ward; the Council would have 14 wards from May 2019, which would correspond with the proposed reduction by 12.5%. However, it was suggested that an uneven number of members on Planning Applications Committee could help address the issue of using the Chairman's casting vote, which was reported to have arisen several times in the recent past. Taking into account these factors, the Working Group agreed to recommend that, from May 2019, the Planning Applications would comprise 15 members.
9. It was felt that the Audit & Standards Committee and Appointments Committee had a suitable number of members, with 7 and 5 members respectively. No changes were therefore proposed to the size of these committees.
10. The Working Group therefore recommends that, from May 2019, membership levels for each of the committees be as follows

Planning Applications	15
Licensing	13
Performance and Finance Scrutiny	13
External Partnerships Select	13
Audit & Standards	7
Appointments	5

Minor changes to the Constitution

11. The Working Group reviewed a number of proposed amendments to the Constitution. The changes proposed principally updated references in the Constitution and ensured that cross references in different sections of the Constitution were consistent.
12. Consideration was also given to the maximum number of members of the Executive that could be appointed to the Regulatory Committees and the Joint Staff Consultative Group. This had been proposed in view of the reduction in councillors from May 2019, taking into account a potential reduction in the size of committees, whilst also recognising a need to ensure an appropriate balance of members on these non-executive bodies.
13. The Working Group noted the reasons for the proposed changes but also recognised that such an amendment could affect the majority group leader's ability to allocate sufficient members to a committee. It was agreed to recommend that the rule be amended so it was expressed as a percentage of the body's membership, but the situation would be monitored.
14. A schedule of proposed minor amendments to the Constitution is attached at Annex B to this report.

Social Media Policy for Councillors

15. The Working Group considered a new Social Media Guide for councillors. This guide was intended to provide practical guidance for councillors in their use of social media and would sit alongside the Social Media Protocol for Councillors, which formed part of the Documents Which Support the Constitution.
16. The Working Group also reviewed the Social Media Protocol for Councillors. An additional paragraph had been proposed encouraging councillors to share the posts on their own social media channels whilst also requesting that they don't post questions or political statements below the posts on the Council's page.
17. Concerns were expressed about restricting councillors' ability to express views on the Council's pages. It was suggested that the paragraph should be amended to encourage Members to contact officers before posting a comment and that, where relevant, the appropriate Portfolio Holder would be asked to respond to any political statements made instead of an officer. The restriction on Members posing on Council pages would be removed.
18. The Working Group agreed that paragraph would be revised and circulated to its members for agreement; the Executive Head of Corporate would thereafter be asked to update the Social Media Protocol for Councillors in accordance with authority granted in the Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers.

Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

19. The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy had been updated to reflect amendments to job titles and the change of the Council's External Auditor.
20. In accordance with the Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers, following feedback from the Working Group, the Executive Head of Corporate agreed the proposed changes to the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy. The revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy is attached at Annex C to this report for information.

Options

21. The Council has the option to agree, amend or reject any of the changes recommended as part of this report.

Resource Implications

22. There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

Recommendation

23. The Council is asked to RESOLVE that
 - (i) the ICT Code of Practice for Members, as attached at Annex A to this report, be agreed;
 - (ii) from May 2019, membership levels for each of the committees be as follows:

Planning Applications	15
Licensing	13
Performance and Finance Scrutiny	13
External Partnerships Select	13
Audit & Standards	7
Appointments	5
 - (iii) minor updates to the Constitution, as attached at Annex B to this report, be agreed; and
 - (iv) the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, as set out at Annex C to the report, be noted.

Annexes: Annex A – revised ICT Code of Practice for Members
Annex B – schedule of minor updates to the Constitution
Annex C – revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

Background Papers: None

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