

Governance Working Group

Portfolio	Leader
Ward(s) Affected:	n/a

Purpose

To consider recommendations from the Governance Working Group in relation to the Planning Code of Practice – Committee Member Site Visits Procedure, Financial Regulations and the IT Code of Practice for Members and to note the situation regarding the Licensing Sub Committees.

Introduction

1. The Working Group met on 5 February 2016 and 18 March 2016. The notes of these meetings are available on the Intranet.
2. The Working Group has considered a number of issues and made recommendations which are addressed below.

The Planning Code of Practice – Committee Member Site Visits Procedure

3. At its meeting on 5 February 2016, the Working Group considered the Planning Code of Practice in light of changes to the scheduling of Planning Committee meetings.
4. A decision to move meetings of the Planning Committee from a Monday to a Thursday from the start of the 2016/17 Municipal Year has resulted in the current procedures for requesting site visits becoming unworkable. Consequently the Working Group has reviewed the procedure for committee member site visits and agreed these should be revised to reflect this change and make the process more flexible in the future.
5. It has been proposed that requests for a site visit must be received by 4pm at least four clear working days before a Committee meeting and the Council's Constitution be updated accordingly. In addition, the Working Group agreed that the Planning Code of Practice for Councillors and Officers be reviewed at a future meeting.

Financial Regulations

6. The Working Group, at its meeting on 18 March 2016, considered the revised Financial Regulations.
7. Under the Council's Constitution it is a requirement that a full review of the Financial Regulations is carried out every five years. The review ensures that the Council met this requirement and enabled the Regulations to not only be updated to reflect legislative changes and the changes brought about by the implementation of Civica, the Council's new finance and purchasing system,

but also make them more accessible and user friendly. The revised Regulations were subjected to detailed consultation with both CMT and Internal Audit.

8. Awareness of the Financial Regulations across the Council is limited and should the Council resolve to approve and adopt the revised Regulations then all staff will be required to complete an e-learning package on their content that has been developed by Internal Audit and completion of compulsory training will be made a requirement of the Council's induction programme for all new members of staff.

IT Code of Practice for Members

9. The Working Group at its meetings on 6 February 2016 and 18 March 2016 reviewed the IT Code of Practice for Members which had been updated to reflect the changes that had been made to the IT equipment provided to Members.
10. The Working Group agreed that mandatory Data Protection training should be provided for all Councillors. It was proposed that Councillors would now be required to complete one formal training session per term of office. The formal training would be supplemented by briefing notes detailing any changes and updates; these would be sent out on an annual basis with additional briefing notes as required. The Working Group agreed that the mandatory data protection training session for all councillors be held in July this year.
11. The Working Group agreed that any breach of the Code could result in the removal of a Councillor's IT equipment. It was agreed that the Audit and Standards Committee would assume responsibility for authorising this sanction.

Licensing Sub-committee

12. The Working Group has discussed ongoing concerns about Licensing Sub-committees and the fact that only a small number of Members are participating in them.
13. The Licensing Act 2003 restricts the size of the Licensing Committee to between 10 and 15 councillors and that the membership of any Sub-committees established by the Licensing Committee had to be drawn from the main Committee. Furthermore, Sub-committee hearings have to be held within a set timeframe and to ensure the transparency of the process arrangements for hearings have to take into account the needs of applicants. Consequently Sub-committee hearings, which can take several hours, are usually held during business hours; a factor that limits Sub-committee members to those who are available during the day. The Working Group has noted that substitutes of the Licensing Committee are able to sit on Sub-committees and has agreed that increasing participation levels will be explored in more detail at its next meeting.

14. Sub-committee hearings have, where possible, in the past been chaired by either the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee and the Working Group has agreed that, in order to spread the responsibility, a small pool of Licensing Committee members will be nominated to act as Licensing Sub-committee Chairmen.

Recommendation

15. The Council is advised to RESOLVE that
- (i) **paragraph 7, Appendix B of the Planning Code of Practice for Councillors and Officers at Part 5 of the Constitution be amended as follows;**

'requests must be made in writing, explaining the reason for the request, to the Development Manager with a copy forwarded to the Executive Head of Regulatory and the Democratic and Electoral Services Officer by 4 pm ~~on the Monday preceding~~ four clear working days before the Planning Applications Committee meeting.'
 - (ii) **the revised Financial Regulations, attached as Annex A be adopted; and**
 - (iii) **the revised IT Code of Practice for Members, attached as Annex B be adopted.**

Annexes	Annex A – Financial Regulations Annex B – IT Code of Practice for Members
Background Papers:	None
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