MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

18 January 2023 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor H. Ayres (Chair)

Councillors K. Bentley, N.A. Dudley, D.G. Jones and M. Steel

Also in attendance –

Parish Councillor V Chiswell

Independent Person –
Mrs P Mills

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Thorpe Apps, Walsh, the Independent person Mrs Gosling, Parish Councillor Jackson and Mrs Saltmarsh.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 31st October 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

All Members were reminded to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary interests or other registerable interests where appropriate in any items of business on the meeting's agenda. None were made.

4. Public Question Time

No questions were asked or statements made by members of the public.

4. Chair's Announcements

No Announcements were made.

6. Monitoring Officer Report

The Committee received a report from the Monitoring Officer on the latest statistical data for complaints under the standards regime. The Committee heard that one hearing was outstanding and had now been set for the 14th of February. It was noted that three complaints had been received in 2022, which had been significantly less than in 2021. The Committee also heard that the City Council continued to encourage all Parishes to adopt the model code and quarterly meetings with parish clerks had continued to take place. It was noted that training sessions on the model code had also been continuing, with attendance by both City and Parish Councillors. It was noted that under the model code, it could now be a breach of the code if a Councillor refused to attend training in the future.

The Committee were also updated on the Independent Person recruitment process, and it was noted that one applicant had already been shortlisted. The Committee also heard that reviews of the Employee Code of Conduct and Whistleblowing Policy had taken place.

RESOLVED that;

1. the current statistical information as to complaints made be noted and published on the website;
2. the position in relation to the adoption of the model code of conduct at parish tier councils be noted;
3. the position concerning the review of the Employee Code of Conduct and Whistleblowing Policy be noted and;
4. the recruitment of a further Independent Person be noted.

<div align="center">(7.02pm to 7.14pm)</div>

7. Review of Standards complaints procedures

The Committee received an update in relation to the review of the Council's Standards complaints procedure. It was noted that a periodic review had taken place to ensure compliance with changes in legislation and also in light of the high level of complaints in 2021. It was noted that a review of the investigation procedure would take place at a later date. The Committee were informed of a number of minor changes, that were detailed as tracked changes in the appendix. The Committee heard that the majority of those simply sought to clarify and provide more detail as to the current process.

In response to points raised by the Committee, it was noted that;

- the use of the word Council or City/Parish would be clarified.
- paragraph 1.4 that detailed the Monitoring Officer would be moved earlier in the document.

- Paragraph 4.2.3, referred to a report being provided to the Parish clerk not the full Parish Council.
- Paragraph 6.1 would be amended to clarify the involvement of an Independent Person at this stage.
- As part of the next step, when updating the investigation procedure, a flowchart style summary would be considered.

The Independent Person also stated they were supportive of the changes, which made the process a lot clearer for the reader.

RESOLVED that the proposed changes be approved.

(7.15pm to 7.28pm)

8. Work Programme

The Committee received a report updating them on their work programme. The hearing date of 14th February at 2pm was noted.

RESOLVED that the work programme be agreed.

(7.29pm to 7.33pm)

9. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.33pm.

Chair