

MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

24 November 2021 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor N.A. Dudley (Chair)

Councillors H. Ayres, K. Bentley, D.G. Jones, N.M. Walsh and I. Wright

Also in attendance –

Parish Councillors V Chiswell and P Jackson

Independent Persons –
Mrs P Mills and Mrs C Gosling

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Thorpe-Apps and Parish Councillor Saltmarsh.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 8 September 2021 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 public questions were asked or statements made.

5. Chair's Announcements

No Announcements were made

6. Monitoring Officer Report

The Committee received a report updating them on recent standards complaints. It was noted by the Committee that the level of complaints being received continued to be high, with six being received since the June meeting. The Committee also heard that some complaints had nearly been fully investigated and it may be necessary for hearings to be scheduled soon. It was also noted by the Committee that four new linked complaints had recently been identified for investigation.

The Committee were also informed about the retention and destruction policy for Standards Complaints. It was noted that this had been brought in line with the Council's existing policies and would now be kept for six years from closure.

RESOLVED that;

1. the current statistical information as to complaints made be noted and published on the Council's website and;
2. the update concerning the application of the retention and destruction policy in relation to standards complaints be noted.

(7.02 pm to 7.07 pm)

7. Information Governance Update

The Committee received an annual update on the Council's approach to the assurance and management of information. The update covered the below areas;

- Statutory Requests
- Data Breaches
- Training and Awareness
- Cyber Security Review
- Policies
- Consents
- Privacy Notices
- Risk Management
- Phishing
- Data Mapping

It was noted by the Committee that in 2020/21 the Information Governance team had processed 796 requests, with 85% answered within statutory timescales. The percentage was slightly lower than the previous year but due to the pandemic this was still considered a good performance level. It was also noted that only one case was referred to the Information Commissioner's Office. The Committee also heard that the number of data breaches had decreased from 43% in 2019/20 to 22 in 2020/21. The Committee also heard about various training courses that had been completed by staff and members. It was also noted that a phishing exercise had

recently been run by the Information Governance Team to raise awareness for staff of the potential risks.

In response to a question from the Committee, it was noted that the Council's privacy notices and any marketing emails were on an opt-in basis.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(7.08 pm to 7.22 pm)

8. Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review

The Committee considered a report containing information on the number of Ombudsman complaints received by Chelmsford City Council over the last year. A letter from the Local Government Ombudsman dated 21 July 2021 and summaries of the Council's performance were attached as appendices 1-2 to the report.

The Committee noted that they were pleased to see no complaints had been upheld against the Council during the year.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(7.23 pm to 7.27 pm)

9. Senior Responsible Officer's report in relation to the Council's RIPA arrangements

The Committee considered a report updating them on the Council's RIPA arrangements. The Committee noted that a significant review of RIPA arrangements had been undertaken in 2020 and this year's review had only led to minor updates. It was noted that this was just due to a change in personnel which had been dealt with administratively by issuing an updated policy. The Committee also noted that RIPA policies along with training needs would continue to be reviewed annually with any ongoing actions through the RIPA officer working group.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(7.28 pm to 7.31 pm)

10. Annual Whistleblowing Report

The Committee received a report updating it on the operation of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure. It was noted by the Committee that 12 reports had been made. It was also noted by the Committee that six of these were not valid whistleblowing complaints as they related to alleged wrongdoing by third parties not connected to the Council.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(7.32 pm to 7.35 pm)

11. Work Programme

The Committee received a report updating them on their work programme. It was noted that some items had been moved due to the extra meeting in February to further consider the Community Governance Review. It was also noted by the Committee that the Constitution review would likely be moved to a later meeting and that there was the potential for one or two standards hearings early in the new year. The Committee were informed that they would be contacted once some provisional dates for the hearings were available.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(7.36 pm to 7.40 pm)

12. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm.

Chair