



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Standards Committee 13 July 2020

Report Title:	Review of a Revised Member Code and the Review and Introduction of Related Member and Officer Protocol Documents
Cabinet Portfolio	Corporate Services, Estates and Communications
Cabinet Member	CLlr Kate Groucutt
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
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1. Summary

To seek the views of the Committee on the 5 documents listed at 2 below in order that those views will inform the Council meeting on 22 July 2020 prior to adoption of the documents.

2. Recommendations for Decision

The Committee is asked to consider the following documents, provide any comments/further amendments and to recommend them to Council for adoption on 22 July 2020

- i) Code of Conduct for Elected & Co-Opted Members
- ii) Protocol for Member / Officer relations
- iii) Protocol for Councillors and Officers dealing with Planning matters (Planning Protocol)
- iv) Ward Member Protocol
- v) St Helens – A Member led Council -Developing effective Member and Officer relations.

3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 In order for any Council to operate effectively it is necessary to have robust Standards arrangements in place in order to safeguard local democracy, maintain high standards of conduct, and to protect ethical practice in local government.
- 3.2 A key recommendation of the LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge report published in January 2019 was to highlight the need to improve joint working between Members and Officers. It stressed 'the need for a better understanding of their respective roles and reset the Council's culture to drive positive change and ensure it addresses the issue of poor Member behaviour'.

4. Background /Reasons for the recommendations

- 4.1 Members may recall that the review of the Member Code, Member & Officer protocol and the Planning protocol was last formally considered by the Committee at its meeting on 2nd April 2019 - a copy of that report (but not appendices to it) which sets out the background to the review is attached at Appendix 1. Subsequently the meeting of Annual Council last year decided that the documents should be the subject of further review.
- 4.2 Initially a working group of the Standards Committee considered the matter, and proposed further changes be made to the documents. Prior to adoption it was considered appropriate to seek the views of the new senior management team on the documents. In addition to suggesting some changes primarily to the Member Officer protocol, it was proposed that 2 new documents be introduced, these being the 'Ward Member protocol', together with the 'Member Led Council – Developing effective Member and Officer relations' document.
- 4.3 The changes to the 3 original documents and the 2 new documents proposed to be introduced were initially considered at a teams meeting of the Standards Committee working group which took place on 16 June 2020 .The working group meeting decided that the documents should be considered by the political groups who would then each make submissions on the documents that could be considered by the Standards Committee.
- 4.4 The 5 documents now being considered for adoption are appended to this report. The documents comprise: -

- Member Code – Appendix 2,
- Member & Officer protocol – Appendix 3
- Planning protocol – Appendix 4
- Ward Member protocol – Appendix 5 and
- Member Led Council – Appendix 6.

Members are informed that in terms of the original 3 documents the black text represents the original wording, the red text represents changes agreed at the original meeting of the Standards working group, and the changes made in blue represent suggested amendments made by the new senior management team.

4.5 Members are informed that the responses of the political groups are to be found in Appendix 7.

5. Consideration of Alternatives

5.1 It is necessary to have the Code and Protocols in place for the reasons set out in the Purpose section of this report. The detailed wording set out in each document is for the consideration and decision of Members.

6. Conclusions

6.1 It is important that an up to date Code and Protocols are put in place as soon as possible for the reasons set out in this report.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial Implications

7.1.1 N/A

7.2 Legal Implications

7.2.1 The Council is required to adopt a Member Code of Conduct

7.3 Staffing/HR Implications

7.3.1 N/A

7.4 Impact on our customers/residents

It is vital that that these documents are in place in order to ensure the effective operation of the Council.

7.5 Community Impact Assessment

7.5.1 N/A

7.6 Asset / Property Implications

7.6.1 N/A

7.7 Environmental implications

7.7.1 N/A

7.8 Policy Framework Implications

7.8.1 The proposals set out in the report are in full accord with the policies of the Council.

7.9 Risks

7.9.1 No risks associated with adopting the Code, protocol and associated documentation.

7.10 Link to Council's priorities

7.10.1 It is a statutory requirement to adopt a Code of Conduct. The Council recognises in accordance with the findings of the Peer review that it needs to improve joint working between Members & Officers, and to clarify the respective roles of both.

8. **Background papers**

None

9. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Report to Standards Committee 2nd April 2019

Appendix 2 – Member Code

Appendix 3 – Member & Officer Protocol

Appendix 4 – Planning Protocol

Appendix 5 – Ward Member Protocol

Appendix 6 – Member Led Council

Appendix 7 – Political Group responses received.