

COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2021-2022

Head of Service: Amardip Healy, Chief Legal Officer
Wards affected: (All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no) No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:
Appendices (attached): 1: Draft Work Plan 2021-2022

Summary

To agree a Committee Work Plan for the Municipal Year 2021-2022

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Consider and approve a Committee Work Plan for 2021-2022.

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The annual work plan will help provide the necessary priorities for the Municipal Year. This will help to identify the support and resources which may be needed during the course of the year.

2 Background

- 2.1 Over the last 3 years the Council has been updating its Constitution and governance processes. The Standards Committee was formerly set up and started meeting on a regular basis from 2018. As changes to the Constitution were being brought forward, the Committee took more of an active role in bringing together the various elements of the Constitution.
- 2.2 For this reason the work of Standards Committee has grown over the years. The Committee has reached the stage where an agreed work plan for Municipal Year would help structure its work programme.

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- 2.3 The work plan has been developed to balance a number of needs. The Council needs to update its Constitution but it also needs to keep abreast of good practice in areas of governance, of the training and support of its Members. The Work Plan for this year has been developed in response to a number of areas where further structure or development would support how the Council operates and meeting the development needs of Councillors.
- 2.4 There may be issues which arise during the course of the year which require attention and so the Work Plan may need to adapt and flex as needed.
- 2.5 There are a range of new items on the Work Plan as well as matters which are outstanding. It is important to try and ensure all the work on the Work Plan is completed in year. To help track progress there will be a Work Plan progress report on each agenda this year. The work Plan will require additional meetings to be added to the diary for 2022.
- 2.6 Although most of the matters on the draft work plan are self-explanatory, it is useful to explain the background or reasoning for some of the items.

Member Induction & Training Program

- 2.7 Following the Local Elections in 2019, the Council trialed a new approach to Member Induction. The process delivered a structured approach to all the necessary activities which are a part of induction to the role of a Councillor.
- 2.8 To build on the new approach which was taken, it is important to capture the learning lessons, particularly to those who were newly elected to the role of a Councillor. To have an agreed approach to induction and member training over a term of office, is critically important to ensuring the right support is in place for a role, which is ever more demanding and complex.
- 2.9 Developing and mapping a program needs to start now to ensure it is in place for the next local elections in 2023.

Outside Bodies

- 2.10 The appointment to Outside Bodies requires a review, not just in terms of which bodies Members should be appointed to, but also in terms of the expected outcomes or deliverables from such appointments. There also needs to be guidance to Members in terms of what those appointments may involve.
- 2.11 A draft guidance note, "A guide for Councillors appointed to Outside Bodies", was produced and circulated in 2019. However, work on reviewing Outside Bodies has not taken place. This work does need to be undertaken, with approved guidance and processes in place for 2023.

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Reporting on Ombudsman decisions

- 2.5 In October 2020, the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman has issued guidance to Local Authorities on effective complaint handling. A key element of the advice is the monitoring and learning from complaints. There is a growing practice of complaining to a Council's Monitoring Officer of when complainants believe the Council has acted unlawfully across the sector.
- 2.6 The Ombudsman recommends reporting on complaint handling performance annually and to make this information available to the public. It is therefore proposed that this report be brought to Standards Committee, pending the general review of Committee Terms of Reference.

Officer & Member Indemnities

- 2.7 The Council agreed a number of indemnities in the last Municipal Year because the Constitution did not cover the matters which arose.
- 2.8 One urgent indemnity was to enable a Member to proceed with a judicial review to set aside a wrongly issued planning permission. Although these occasions are extremely rare, it is important to have in place the necessary indemnities to allow the Council to take appropriate action quickly.

Review of Code of Conduct Complaints

- 2.9 In January 2020 the Committee agreed that an annual report would be brought to its first meeting at the start of the Municipal year. It was accepted that since the review of the period from 2018 to end of 2020 was brought in January 2020, the next annual report would not be brought until the start of the 2022 Municipal Year.
- 2.10 The Committee also agreed that key performance indicators would be incorporated into the reporting data, namely detail dates of complaints coming in, as well as the start and completion dates for any investigations that may take place.
- 2.11 It is therefore proposed to bring a report at the end of the current Municipal Year to agree the form the Annual report will take.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Impact Assessment

3.1.1 None

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3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 None

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 None

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 None

3.5 Other

3.5.1 None

4 Financial Implications

4.1 None arising from the contents of this report

4.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments: None arising from the contents of this report.**

5 Legal Implications

5.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

5.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Effective Council.

6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None arising from the contents of this report.

6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None arising from the contents of this report.

6.5 **Partnerships:** None arising from the contents of this report.

7 Background papers

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

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- Review of Code of Conduct Complaints, Standards Committee, 18 January 2021.

<https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/s18308/Review%20of%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20Complaints.pdf>

- Indemnities, Council 16 February 2021

<https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/s19021/Indemnities.pdf>

- Election Indemnities, 16 February 2021

<https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/s19022/Election%20Indemnities.pdf>

Other papers:

- Constitution
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, “Guidance on Effective Complaint Handling for Local Authorities”.

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/information-for-link-officers?chapter=4>