

## **Ethics Committee**

Meeting of held on Wednesday, 9 February 2022 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Jerry Fitzpatrick (Chair);  
Councillor Pat Clouder (Vice-Chair);

Councillors Mario Creatura, Clive Fraser, Joy Prince and Helen Redfern

Independent Members Jennifer Gordon, Ashok Kumar, Alan Malarkey and Anne Smith

### **PART A**

#### **1/22 Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

#### **2/22 Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

#### **3/22 Officers Code of Conduct**

The Committee received a report on the review of and revisions to the Officer Code of Conduct. The Officer Code of Conduct was reviewed alongside the Members' Code of conduct to ensure consistency. The Code was originally due to be brought to the Committee in November with the Members' Code of Conduct. The revised Officer Code of Conduct fully embeds the Nolan Principles in all work as one of the strands of the Croydon Renewal Improvement Plan.

Gillian Bevan, Head of Human Resources (Resources and Assistant Chief Executives), introduced the report.

The following matters were raised by the Committee:

- a) Views expressed by Trade Unions: Following a question from a Member of the Committee, the Officer noted that in taking the Code to the Trade Unions to review, the Trade Unions were interested in the widening of the remit of the Code, which now captured temporary staff, agency staff and external seconders. Another area of interest from the Trade Unions view was the further guidance around what constituted bullying/Harassment and acceptable behaviour

- b) Pending Criminal Convictions: Members of the Committee raised a question around what would happen if someone pending criminal investigation resigned from the Council. The Officer explained that each case would be reviewed individually, and the disciplinary process may still proceed. At the point that the individual was no longer an employee matters would then need to be dealt with as appropriate through external agencies.
- c) Working from Home: Following a question from a Member of the Committee, the Officer noted that the Flexible Working Policy is being reviewed to incorporate hybrid working and noted that it would be of benefit to have a link to the Code of Conduct within it
- d) Contractors: Members of the Committee raised concerns regarding the pertinence of the Code of Conduct to contract workers, and whether the Council, in its negotiation with contract workers needed to apply this Code or the contractors' own code, should they have one. This had to be discussed with Corporate Directors involved in the Commissioning process, and would be picked up by the Monitoring Officer.

The Committee thanked Officers for their work on the report.

Following consideration, it was resolved that the Committee:

- 1.1 Agreed to note the revised Officer Code of Conduct (Appendix 1 to the report)
- 1.2 Agreed to the Monitoring Officer raising the issue regarding contract workers at the Corporate level of authority to ensure there is consistency between the Council's Officer Code of Conduct and any contract workers.

#### **4/22 Dispensation Applications for Members**

There were no applications received for Member dispensations and therefore this item was not required.

#### **5/22 Protocol on Staff/Councillor Relations**

The Committee received a report on the Staff/Councillor Relations Protocol which had been reviewed with the aim of assisting both Members and Officers to have an appropriate understanding of their respective roles.

Heather Wills, Governance Improvement Advisor introduced the report.

The following matter was raised by the Committee:

- Information: Members of the Committee highlighted the importance of Officers at every level understanding what information Members needed access to. The Officer noted that the Access to Information Protocol which the Committee had previously considered went into more detail around Members' rights to access information.

Following consideration, it was resolved that the Committee:

1. Reviewed the draft revisions to the Staff-Councillor Relations Protocol;
2. Recommend to General Purposes and Audit Committee the inclusion of these revisions with a package of wider changes to the Constitution, to be recommended to Council on 23 March 2022.

## **6/22 Member Learning and Development Induction Programme**

The Committee received a report detailing the draft Member Induction Programme for 2022, which had been considered at the Member Learning and Development Panel in January.

John Jones, Monitoring Officer introduced the report.

The following matters were raised by the Committee:

- a) Reserves: Members of the Committee highlighted the importance of Licensing and Planning training being extended to reserve Members;
- b) Accessibility of Sessions: Members of the Committee raised concerns regarding the Induction session being offered as a daytime session soon after the date of appointment. The Officer explained that due to the scale of content provided, it was common practice in London Boroughs to hold the first part of the Induction over one daytime session. The Officer explained that once Candidates were formally declared, they would all be contacted to put the date of the Induction session in their diary whether it was expected that they be elected or not. This gave them more notice of the requirement to attend the training;
- c) Council Functions: Members of the Committee highlighted a lack of structure charts and noted that it was difficult to know which services delivered which functions, particularly for newly elected Members. The Officer noted that there would be a 'Marketplace' on the Induction Day in which Members could speak to Directors and get a comprehensive understanding of the Council's structure. The Officer also noted that they would ensure the Member Handbook included updated Structure Charts and descriptions of each function and the buddy system and further briefings would also support understanding. Members asked that further attention be given to providing training on Council functions;
- d) Mayoral Model: Members of the Committee highlighted the upcoming change to the Mayoral Model. The Officer confirmed that this had been considered in the process of planning the training programme;
- e) Planning: Members of the Committee highlighted that it would be helpful to have some training around the wider ramifications of the Planning process. The Officer noted that this would be picked up as part of the wider training for Members.

Following consideration, it was resolved that the Committee:

1. Noted progress in developing a detailed Induction programme for May 2022 and provided comments set out in the Minutes to inform its further development;

2. Noted that implementation of the programme was dependent on the identification of appropriate resources for the Democratic Services team;
3. Would promote engagement within their Groups with the activities listed in the programme.

**7/22 Work Programme**

The Committee received a report detailing the Work Programme for the next meeting of the Committee.

Sarah Keeble, Democratic Services Officer introduced the report, highlighting that the report recommended Items for the first meeting following Annual Council. However, there was one meeting scheduled for 6 April in the current administration. Due to Items being carried over from a previous meeting, it was likely that the 6 April meeting would go ahead.

Following consideration, it was resolved that the Committee:

1. Considered the Work Programme that would be agreed and approved at the next meeting of the Committee.

**8/22 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

No applications for dispensations had been received and there were no Part B Minutes to consider. Therefore, there was no requirement to go into a private session.

The meeting ended at 7.43 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

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