

STANDARDS & ETHICS COMMITTEE: 28th MARCH 2018

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL
SERVICES & MONITORING OFFICER**

AGENDA ITEM:

MEMBER BRIEFING

Reason for this Report

1. To enable the Committee to consider the content of its next Member Briefing and approve arrangements for the Briefing to be finalised and issued.

Background

2. In response to the Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment Follow-On Report, the Cabinet decided that the Standards and Ethics Committee should be asked to publish a biannual Member Briefing on the work of the Committee (Action reference P5a, approved by Cabinet in March 2016). The aim of the Briefings is to underline the importance of the Cardiff Undertaking and Member conduct and behaviour, and provide relevant guidance as necessary.
3. The Committee has issued three previous Briefings; the first in August 2016; a second short Briefing in March 2017; and the last Briefing in September 2017.

Issues

4. The Committee is invited to consider and provide comments on the contents of its next Member Briefing. Suggested contents include:

Chair's Foreword

- Welcome and introduction
- General observation that standards of conduct have improved, with Council meetings being noticeably more business focussed and less fractious.

Member Conduct Complaints

- To explain the Committee's regular monitoring of the number of complaints made about Members' conduct and any themes or patterns emerging
- To report that the number of complaints received during 2017/18 remains low – a total of six complaints during the first three quarters of the year, which represents a significant decrease from previous years.
- To report that all six cases have been closed with no findings of misconduct.

Local Resolution Protocol

- To confirm that the local resolution protocol continues to provide a helpful process for resolving Member disputes in a timely and proportionate way.
- To report that no cases were referred to a formal Hearings Panel during the last 6 months.
- To explain that Community Councils are being encouraged to adopt their own local resolution protocols, using a model developed by One Voice Wales in consultation with the Ombudsman.

Community Councils

- To explain that the Committee has agreed a programme of actions to improve its engagement with Community Councils and promote high standards of conduct
- To report that the Monitoring Officer is trying to arrange a meeting with all Clerks to discuss this and other matters of common interest
- To report that members of the Committee are being encouraged to attend a Community Council meeting to familiarise themselves with the work of Community Councils
- To reiterate that Community Councillors are welcome to attend the Committee's meetings

Training and Development

- To invite Members to contact the Monitoring Officer if there are any specific conduct issues they would like further training or advice on
- To offer to arrange a session specifically for Community Councillors if there is sufficient interest

'The Cardiff Undertaking'

- To note that all Members will be asked to publicly reaffirm their commitment to the principles set out in the Undertaking at the Annual Council meeting in May.

New Committee Members

- To introduce our two new Committee members – Community Councillor Stuart Hughes, Chair of Pentyrch Community Council; and Thora Lewis, our newly appointed Independent Member.

Meeting with Cardiff Group Leaders and Whips

- To inform Members that the Committee's annual meeting with group leaders and whips is due to take place in June 2018; and invite them to put forward any relevant issues for discussion here

Advice

- To confirm that advice on any conduct issue is available from the Monitoring Officer or her Deputy (with contact details)

Feedback or Further information

- To invite feedback.
 - To inform Members that they can contact the Standards and Ethics Committee Chair, Richard Tebboth, directly (and give contact details)
5. It is proposed that the Member Briefing should be issued to all Members of Cardiff Council and Cardiff's six Community Councils.

Legal Implications

6. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Financial Implications

7. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Provide comments on the contents of the Member Briefing, as set out in the report;
- 2) Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair, to finalise the Briefing, having regard to comments provided by Members of the Committee; and
- 3) Instruct the Monitoring Officer to issue the finalised Member Briefing to all Members of Cardiff Council and Cardiff's six Community Councils.

Davina Fiore
Director of Governance and Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
21st March 2018

Background papers

Standards and Ethics Committee report, 'Member Briefing', September 2017