

Report to	Standards Committee
Date of meeting	17 September 2021
Lead Member / Officer	Gary Williams, Monitoring Officer
Report author	Gary Williams, Monitoring Officer
Title	Protocol on Member/Officer Relations

1. What is the report about?

1.1. The report is about the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations (the Protocol) which forms part of the Council's Constitution and is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. To inform the Committee of the content of the Protocol.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. That members of the Committee note and provide any suggestions for improvement in the content of the Protocol.

4. Report details

4.1. The Code of Conduct for Elected Members requires that councillors should treat everyone, including officers of the authority, with respect and consideration and that they should not bully or harass any person. The Code of Conduct for Employees, which is the subject of a separate report, requires officers of the authority to act with political neutrality, serving all councillors in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

4.2. The Protocol is designed to set out in more detail how the relationship between members and officers should work and to help members and officers to understand their respective roles and the framework within which they are conducted.

4.3. The Protocol seeks to set out what it is that members and officers can reasonably expect from each other in terms of support and respect for their respective roles. The Protocol seeks to give guidance that guards against a closeness of relationship that would become inappropriate or give the impression that officers' advice was not impartial.

- 4.4. The content of the Protocol includes guidance as to the access to be given to Councillors to information and documents and the requirement to keep local members updated about significant matters affecting their wards.
- 4.5. The Protocol also contains guidance on the provision of advice to political groups, the attendance of officers at meetings not organised by the Council and the manner in which correspondence should be conducted.
- 4.6. If any member is concerned that an officer may be in breach of the terms of the Protocol, then they should raise the matter with the relevant head of service to try and resolve the issue. This has the potential to lead to disciplinary action in appropriate cases. Similarly, if an officer raises a concern that a member has breached the terms of the Protocol, they are able to raise it with their head of service who may seek to resolve the issue with the relevant member. In more serious cases the officer may wish to refer the matter through the Council's local resolution process or make a complaint to the Ombudsman if the conduct complained of is considered to be a breach of the Code of Conduct.
- 4.7. The Committee's comments are invited as to the content of the Protocol and any suggestions for improvements to it.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

- 5.1. The report has no direct impact on the corporate priorities.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1. There are no costs directly associated with the report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1. This report does not require an impact assessment.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1. This matter has not been reported or consulted upon elsewhere.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1. There are no direct financial consequences as a result of this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

- 10.1. There are no risks directly associated with this report.

11. Power to make the decision

- 11.1. There is no decision required.