

Report of the Monitoring Officer

Local Government Association Report

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report advises Members of the contents of a report prepared by the Local Government Association following a recent peer review.

2. Background

- 2.1 On the 9th October the City Council passed the following motion:

“Council notes with concern the results of the Organisational Development Action Plan, in particular the Leadership section and the current position re ‘Concern about the Behaviour of some Members’. This follows last year’s Peer Challenge review which also expressed concern regarding members’ understanding of council priorities and the lack of clarity within the council. Council requests that an independent body be appointed to report back to the Audit and Governance Committee no later than its meeting of 10 December 2014 and that the report is delivered directly to this committee, investigating these concerns and whether Members have acted in a manner which falls below that which staff and residents expect. This report should take into account the personalised politics being exhibited within York by elected members and their supporters – most notably on social media.”

- 2.2 A team of peers representing the Local Government Association’s political groups was assembled and their work was overseen by the Association’s regional lead officer. The annexed report was produced and considered by the Audit and Governance Committee at their meeting on 15th January 2015.

Officers were tasked with preparing an action plan to present to the next meeting of that Committee on 11th February.

2.3 Some of the issues raised in the Review clearly fall within the remit of this Committee and, in light of the timings of the meetings, it seems appropriate for this Committee to consider the report in advance of the action plan being considered by Audit and Governance Committee.

2.4 There is one specific recommendation for the Standards Committee which is recommendation o:

“For the Standards Committee to consider how to supplement the work of Group Leaders, whips and officers in enforcing behaviour, and also how to work with members outside the influence of whips, such as Independent members. More generally for the Joint Standards Committee to review its way of working.”

2.5 That recommendation is particularly linked to recommendations m and n that:

“Those in leadership positions, particularly Group Leader and whips (where they exist) need to recognise their particular responsibility, to model good behaviour, to play their role in reaffirming and reinforcing good behaviour and in challenging poor behaviour, particularly by their own members. Members in leading positions need to step up to this role.” and

“Senior officers being enabled and encouraged to pro-actively support members in enforcing the new standards and to step up to this role.”

2.6 The Committee is asked to consider how it would wish to respond to this recommendation.

2.7 The Review team also recommended that a cross party group should be established to review and develop a set of charters, codes and protocols listed in recommendations d to k. Those recommendations included a recommendation to:

“Review the Member Code of Conduct and Member/Officer Protocol; including access to officers”

- 2.8 The Committee may wish to express a view as to whether and how it ought to influence and support such a Review. Any comments made could be reported to both Group Leaders and to Audit and Governance Committee.

Recommendations

3. Members are recommended to:
- 1) Consider how best to respond to the recommendation set out in paragraph 2.4
 - 2) Make comment in relation to the proposal that the Code of Conduct and Member Officer protocol should be reviewed by a cross party group and how the Committee might support such a Review.

Reason: To ensure that the Committee makes a positive contribution to the development of high ethical standards in the Council.

Contact Details

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Report
Approved

Date 30/01/2015

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes: LGA Review document