

STANDARDS COMMITTEE**WEDNESDAY, 25 JANUARY 2017****21. Question and Answer Session - Leader of the Council and Chief Executive**

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, and John Gilbert, the Chief Executive, were in attendance to report to the Committee on matters relating to the Council's ethical governance framework and issues of probity, particularly the Authority's approach to ethical governance and its key priorities in ensuring that high ethical standards continue to be promoted and maintained within the Council.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Renard addressed the meeting on the efficacy of the Council's ethical framework and its embedding within the organisation as an easily recognised platform for member behaviours when representing the Authority. It was his view that the framework continued to work well and, referring to issues raised at his last meeting with the Standards Committee, he commented on the enhanced opportunities for staff to provide feedback to members and senior management on issues of concern and interest, these including regular officer forums and a variety of staff engagement events. Councillor Renard remarked that these events had also provided an opportunity to provide information to staff, on a "face to face" basis, relating to the Council Vision and its priorities and other corporate issues. He made specific reference to the use of such forums and staff events to facilitate the ongoing consultation regarding car parking provision and mileage allowances and also the opportunity for engagement with the trade unions on corporate issues via the regular Council Joint Consultative Committee meetings.

Councillor Renard assured the meeting that he and his Cabinet colleagues were supportive of officers and their work and referred to the relationships and interactions between members and officers, which he felt remained generally positive, with a high degree of respect and professionalism and co-operation evident on both sides.

The Chief Executive also remarked on the enhanced opportunities for staff to provide feedback to members and senior management, specifically referring to engagement with heads of service and section managers to provide updates and facilitate information exchange on any number of issues via the newly-instated regular meetings of the Extended Management Team (EMT) and Wider Management Team (WMT). He advised that it was a purpose of these meetings to establish an environment that would allow officers to contribute to the Council's change agenda and help identify areas where service improvements might be made. He referred to the transformation work being undertaken and the variety of transformation programmes that had been established, each sponsored by a Director, and advised that he, himself, was sponsoring a leadership and management training module aimed at expanding managers' knowledge of corporate culture and ethics, both from a leadership management perspective and also the opportunities for individual staff members to be involved in the process.

Following their opening remarks, the Leader and Chief Executive responded to members' questions and observations on the following issues:

- The pending review of the composition of the Corporate Management Team, following the recent appointment of the Corporate Director Transformation and Resources, and the continued membership on the team of the Monitoring Officer and s151 Officer.
- The future role of the Localities Team, following the Council's recent review of Community Governance arrangements, and the facilitating of future engagement between the Council and Parish Councils.
- The potential to enhance the role of members in facilitating and maintaining links between the Council, Parish Councils and the wider community.
- Member applications for dispensation under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011.
- The potential impact of the establishment of a greater number of Parish Councils on the workload of the Standards Committee.
- The staffing and budgetary implications of the transfer of services from the Council to Parish Councils.

Resolved – That Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, and the Chief Executive be thanked for attending the meeting and for their full and open responses to members questions on matters relating to the Council's ethical governance framework and issues of probity.