



## OFFICER REPORT TO COUNCIL

### REVISED MEMBER / OFFICER PROTOCOL

#### **KEY ISSUE/DECISION:**

1. Surrey County Council is committed to enabling Members and Officers to work effectively together to enable the delivery of positive outcomes for the benefit of residents.
2. In June 2018, The People, Performance and Development Committee requested that the Member Development Steering Group lead a review of the Member/Officer Protocol, ensuring that it is fit for purpose and actively communicated and understood.
3. The Member/Officer Protocol forms part of the Constitution and a decision is required from Council to approve the revised version.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

4. **Informing the review.** To understand the level of understanding of the current Protocol and the existing perceptions and challenges around Member/Officer relationships, engagement was undertaken with both Members and Officers, in the form of one to one interviews and a focus group. This was supplemented by a Protocol benchmarking exercise, comparing the council's existing Protocol with those from twenty other authorities.
5. **Summary of findings specific to the current Protocol:**
  - a. It does not appear to have any real influence on ways of working
  - b. It contains too much information that may not be relevant to Member/Officer relationships
  - c. It includes too much information that is already contained within other documents
  - d. There is repetition throughout the document, with similar points being made
  - e. The document is too long which can result in it not being read/fully understood
  - f. Language used could contribute to a culture of opposition rather than encouraging collaboration and mutual respect

- g. Language is at times ambiguous and lacks specific examples to aid understanding
- h. Some elements assume prior experience in order to put them into context
- i. The cultural shift the council is aiming to achieve is not sufficiently reflected.

#### **KEY CHANGES IN THE NEW DRAFT PROTOCOL:**

- 6. **Contents.** Content that is duplicated, or more appropriately contained within other policy and guidance documents, has been removed. The repetition of similar points have been consolidated and reduced. This has reduced the length of the document.
- 7. **Our People 2021.** Aligning the Protocol to the county council's Vision and Values, as well as the Working Principles developed through our cultural diagnostic work, has been crucial to ensuring it fully reflects the cultural shift we are aiming to achieve across the organisation. As a result, the principles of and language used within the Protocol seek to better reflect this.
- 8. **Clearer examples.** The revisions seek to tackle previous comments around the guidance and language being ambiguous or complex, by including more specific examples and descriptors. This should particularly help those Members and Officers new to working together to understand the relationship, expectations, boundaries and desired behaviours from the outset.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- 9. Implementing the revised Protocol will be supported by an expanded training offer for both Members and Officers, starting from September 2019. The training will be structured so that it covers mandatory induction programmes as well as continuous development in a variety of forms (eLearning, workshop/classroom activities, seminars and other face-to-face events).
- 10. Implementation will also be supported by an internal communications and engagement campaign.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 11. That the County Council endorses the revised Member/Officer Protocol for inclusion in the Constitution.

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#### **Lead/Contact Officers:**

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