

London Road Municipal Buildings

Audit Report – Action Plan

| Suggested Improvement | | Management Action | Timescales | Action Owner |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Principle A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law | | | | |
| 2.1 | On-going training is provided to Officers and Members concerning the need to declare an interest and what could constitute an interest or potential conflict of interest. They are also reminded that declarations relate to any decision-making process including those made outside of Committee meetings. | <p>Members: training was provided for all Members in 2021 when the Council adopted the Local Government Association’s revised Model Code of Conduct. The Local Government Association has since produced a suite of training materials; these will be referenced for future training, in particular for new Member induction following the 2023 District Council elections. In the meantime the findings of this Audit Report will be disseminated for Members.</p> <p>Officers: training on Code of Conduct is included as part of the employee induction process. A reminder regarding the Code was issued to Business Managers in 2021. Refresher training will be included as a requirement as part of the annual appraisal process from 2023. In the meantime the findings of this Audit Report will be disseminated to Managers.</p> | <p>Dissemination of key learning from this Audit Report – July 2022</p> <p>Refresh of Member training – May 2023</p> <p>Refresh of Officer training – March/April 2023</p> | Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) |
| 2.2 | The Council should review how it retains information on declarations of interest made – ensuring that they are transparent and accessible. Actions taken to mitigate potential conflicts of interest should be recorded and acted upon. | <p>Members: declarations made in formal meetings are retained in meeting minutes indefinitely. The Member Register of interests is retained in accordance with legislative requirements; consideration will be given as to whether it would be appropriate to retain for longer.</p> <p>Officers: declarations are recorded and maintained in the HR system in accordance with</p> | <p>Register of Interests – August 2022</p> <p>Recording of mitigation actions on HR system – November 2022</p> | Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) |

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| | | a retention schedule for employee information. Consideration will be given to recording mitigation actions where conflicts are identified. | (once upgrade to HR system complete) | |
| 2.3 | Review members briefing when seeking a steer, sharing ideas and acting as a sounding board should well documented – ensuring that both officers and members are clear on the ‘informal’ and ‘formal’ decision making process and that appropriate due diligence is undertaken and evidenced. | Officers were briefed on maintaining an audit trail of decision-making at the April/May 2022 new governance system training. | Complete but part of ongoing training. | Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) |
| Principle B - Ensuring openness & comprehensive stakeholder engagement | | | | |
| 2.4 | As part of key projects a communication and engagement strategy is developed and where appropriate a communication plan put in place identifying who is responsible for communicating to whom. As part of this a communication log is set up to record significant communication including details of telephone conversations. | The Council has in place a Consultation and Engagement strategy which is currently under review, and this will include guidance as to when it would be appropriate to have a communication plan and a communication log. | November 2022 | Director Customer Services and Organisational Development |
| Principle C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits | | | | |
| 2.5 | The Council should ensure that appropriate due diligence is undertaken for all key decisions and projects so that decision makers are satisfied that all possible alternatives have been considered and fully assessed. | Report templates for the new Governance arrangements require this. | Complete | Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) |

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| 2.6 | <p>The Council should ensure business cases clearly consider five key questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic case - is there strategic fit and a strong case for change? • Economic case - has a wide range of options been considered and can we demonstrate value for money? • Commercial case - is the service delivery commercially viable and what does the deal(s) look like? • Financial case - is the proposal affordable and where are the funds coming from? • Management case - what is the plan for successful delivery of the proposal? | <p>The most recent Business Case template covers these areas and recent Business Plans presented have included all of these 5 areas.</p> <p>Since 2018, all business cases have followed the principles of the 5 key areas within the business case.</p> | Complete | Director Customer Services and Organisational Development |
| Principle D - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes | | | | |
| 2.7 | <p>All decision papers should clearly align with the Council's policy framework and corporate / financial plans. They should clearly set out the business case, risks and impacts (financial and other impacts) – including consultees.</p> | <p>As above, this is covered by the new report template.</p> <p>Since 2018, all decision papers have clearly aligned with the Council's policy framework and corporate/financial plans.</p> | Complete | Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) |
| 2.8 | <p>The Council should ensure that its forward plan (outlining key decisions) should minimise the need for urgent items – ensuring sufficient time and information is provided to members to fully consider items.</p> | <p>Agreed. The Council's forward plan is supplemented by an executive decision making work programme, which will ensure that urgent items are kept to a minimum.</p> | Complete | Chief Executive |

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| 2.9 | Key projects should map a decision-making route / plan at the outset, identifying key decisions, decision makers, timing and reporting requirements. Early assessment around specialist advice should ensure that the right people with the right skills, knowledge and experience are adequately engaged at the outset e.g. finance, legal, property and commercial. | Each decision has a Project Initiation Document containing all these requirements. | Complete | Director Customer Services and Organisational Development |
| Principle F - Managing risks & performance through robust internal control & strong public financial management | | | | |
| 2.10 | All decision reports should include comments from finance, legal and consultees. | Standard template prompts report authors to consider these matters. Currently all decision reports include finance implications and comments from consultees. Legal comments are obtained where relevant. | Complete | Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) |
| 2.11 | Consider a review of committee reporting guidance and training ensuring that its standards on content, option appraisal, clarity and transparency of risks, impact and recommendations is followed. The review should assess the quality of policy impact assessments. All staff who write reports should attend this training. | Report writing guidance was issued in May 2022 as part of the new governance arrangements – training is under development. | 31 March 2023 | Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) |
| 2.12 | Consideration should be given to how the Council can ensure 'corporate memory' on covenants imposed for previously owned assets could be retained and flagged when invoked and / or through the planning process (if appropriate). | The Council is exploring the possibility of introducing an automated process. | 31 March 2023 | Director Resources and Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) |

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| Principle G - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability | | | | |
| 2.13 | All projects follow the Council's project management process - regardless of the lead officer. | Agreed and the Council now has a project management process and project toolkit which it follows on every project. | Complete | Director Customer Services and Organisational Development |
| 2.14 | The Council should ensure suitable evidence is retained for all stages of property deals / projects – including appropriate impact assessments, option appraisals and analysis. | This has been the Council's custom and practice and is incorporated in the Council's Acquisition and Disposal Policy. | Complete | Director Resources and Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) |
| 2.15 | Following the implementation of the new governance framework for the Council – effective scrutiny training should be provided for both officers and members. | Scrutiny training provided for Officers and Members between March and May 2022 and will be provided on an ongoing basis. | Complete and ongoing | Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) |
| 2.16 | A review of the effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny arrangements should be undertaken in 2023/24. | Agreed, captured as part of the 6 month review of the new governance arrangements. | December 2022 | Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) |
| 2.17 | Consideration should be given to the current Constitutional arrangements relating to revocation of Council / Committee decisions. | Agreed and will be picked up as part of the 6 month review of the Council's Constitution. | December 2022 | Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) |