

CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday, 20 February 2025

Present:

Councillor T Cox (Chair)

Councillors G Bennett T Laing
P Gilchrist T Murphy
J Grier M Sullivan

Independent Persons RS Jones
JR McCosh
A Lloyd-Prince

Apologies

G Kerr

19 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed those present and those watching on the webcast to the meeting.

20 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Grahame Kerr, Independent Person to the Committee.

21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

22 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2024 be agreed.

23 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

No questions were received.

24 **REVISED CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE 2025**

A report of the Head of Legal Services sought the Committee's approval of the Council's revised Code of Corporate Governance. The Council's current Code of Corporate Governance had last been reviewed in 2022.

The Code needed to be reviewed, to ensure it was compliant with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)/the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) Guidance/Framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government and followed best practice.

The Council was required to demonstrate through evidence how it met all aspects of the Code, with the revised version including all the evidence relied upon to demonstrate that compliance.

The report had been through the Audit and Risk Committee prior to being presented at this committee, and a number of questions raised about social value, and officers had pointed out that the current social value policy was out of date. The recommendations had been amended within this report to reflect those comments.

Members thanked the Head of Legal Services and officers for their work. They hoped that once a revised Social Value policy had been devised, it would be re-introduced into the Code of Corporate Governance.

Resolved – That the Constitution and Standards Committee:

1. Approves the revised Code of Corporate Governance at Appendix 1 recognising that work is being undertaken to update a number of elements of the supporting evidence, including the social value policy.

2. Recommends the revised Code of Corporate Governance at Appendix 1 to Council for approval and for the framework detailed therein to be included within the Council's Constitution.

25 **REVIEW OF CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES**

The Director of Law and Corporate Services presented the report, which comprised the biennial review of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) which regulated the way in which the Council's contracts were procured. The last review took place in June 2022.

Since that review public procurement law had been significantly changed by the Procurement Act 2023 which came into force on 24 February 2025.

The review incorporated into the Contract Procedure Rules referenced the changes that would be required when the Act became law.

Members queried why figures for contracts to be signed off by legal officers between £100,000 and £250,000 had not changed for a significant period of time.

Members welcomed the changes to the procedure rules. They commented that a revised Social Value policy would support these changes, and that this was the start of a long project of work.

The Head of Procurement informed members that officers had revised the Social Value policy, and that this was being presented to Directors for comment. The new policy would reflect that officers had recently engaged with the social value portal to help them track and monitor social value deliveries and commitments. In regard to the changes to the Procurement Act 2023, officers were organising events to inform local communities on the impact of the changes.

Members asked for reassurance that smaller local businesses would be provided with insight in how to submit bids to the Council, following the changes to the Procurement Act and the refreshed Social Value policy. The Head of Procurement confirmed that the intention was to support small businesses and ensure a level playing field. Officers were aware of the need to adjust the situation regarding social value. Council officers also offered a brokerage service to support the voluntary sector in the borough. The Head of Procurement also confirmed that there was training on F10 for both officers and members on the new Procurement Act.

In response to a question on how officers supported medium to small businesses, the Head of Procurement informed Members that they could not confirm that officers knew all of the businesses within the borough. There was ongoing work on this.

Members discussed the need to encourage local businesses taking on apprentices and the importance of opportunities for young people on the Wirral. It was agreed that an update from the Assistant Director for People and Organisational Culture would be circulated on the number of apprentices within the Council and the Council's approach to this. Members also discussed the possibility of the Council's Communications Team of advertising for procurement opportunities to local businesses, which ward councillors could share on social media.

Resolved –

- 1. That the Constitution and Standards Committee approves the changes to the Contract Procedure Rules that were highlighted in the appendix to this report and recommend their adoption by the full Council as part of the Council's Constitution when the Procurement Act 2023 comes into force.**
- 2. To note that the Constitution and Standards Committee looks forward to a further progressive approach arising from the discussions in hand with local suppliers.**

26 **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2025/26 AND 2026/27**

The Democracy Business Manager presented the report of the Director of Law and Corporate Services which recommended amendments to the previously agreed dates for Council and Committee meetings for the municipal year 2025/2026 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report. The report also recommended draft dates for the municipal year 2026/27 at Appendix 2.

The Democracy and Business Manager informed Members that the 2025/26 Calendar of Meetings had been amended following requests to remove several Wirral Place Based Partnership Board meetings to allow sufficient time between meetings to produce reports for the board. One further revision had been received following publication of the report, with an additional meeting being requested for the 24th July 2025.

It had also been agreed by Policy & Resources Committee at the meeting of the 11th September 2024 that all Shareholder Board matters be considered by P&R Committee until further notice.

Member training dates would be circulated to Members separately.

Members thanked officers for revising the calendar to avoid clashes with political party conferences in Autumn 2025.

Resolved – That the Constitution and Standards Committee recommends to Council:

- (1) That the revised Calendar of Meetings 2025/26 be approved**
- (2) That the Calendar of Meetings 2026/27 be approved.**