

Guildford & Waverley Borough Councils

Report to: Council

Date: 24 January 2024

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Director: Transformation and Governance

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Report Status: Open

Guildford Borough Council & Waverley Borough Council: Officer Employment Procedure Rules

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 There is a statutory obligation upon every Local Authority to have a constitution and to both maintain and publish it. It is considered good practice to keep the constitution under constant review and for councillors to consider a more formal review on an annual basis.
- 1.2 As part of the current work programme to update the constitutions of both Guildford Borough Council (GBC) and Waverley Borough Council (WBC), the Joint Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services has deemed the Officer Employment Procedure Rules as a high priority, requiring urgent attention, particularly at WBC where none currently exist.

- 1.3 WBC currently does not have any Officer Employment Procedure Rules published in its constitution. The GBC Officer Employment Procedure Rules can be found in Part 4 (Procedure Rules) of its constitution. Officers are recommending the introduction of new Officer Employment Procedure Rules, using examples of good practice, based on the statutory framework.
- 1.4 At its meeting on 30 November 2023, this report was considered by the Joint Constitutions Review Group (JCRG). The JCRG agreed to recommend approval of the new Officer Employment Procedure Rules to both the Corporate Governance & Standards Committee and to Waverley's Standards & General Purposes Committee at their respective meetings in January, with a further recommendation that each committee recommends the adoption of the new procedure rules to their respective full Council meetings¹.
- 1.5 At its meeting on 8 January 2024, Waverley's Standards & General Purposes Committee, endorsed the recommendations which affect both councils in paragraphs 2.1, 2.4, and 2.6 of this report (see below), subject to the inclusion in the draft Officer Employment Procedure Rules of a reference to the schedule of proper officers listed in part 3 of the Constitution. Details of the recommendation of the Guildford's Corporate Governance & Standards Committee, following its consideration of this report on 18 January 2024, will be taken to the Guildford Extraordinary Council meeting.
- 1.6 All members of the Joint Management Team (JMT) are employed by WBC and the Officer Employment Procedure Rules based on the Council's current staff structures, apply only to members of the JMT. It is proposed that the new Officer Employment Procedure Rules will be included in the constitutions of both councils. The existing Officer Employment Procedure Rules in GBC's Constitution would be superseded by the new rules.

¹ Extraordinary council meetings scheduled for 23 January (Guildford), and 24 January (Waverley)

- 1.7 The Joint Appointments Committee was formed in August 2021 to deal with the appointments of joint senior members of staff. The TOR for this committee lies in the constitution for both councils, Part 3 page 19 of the GBC constitution and Part 3 appendix 2 of the WBC constitution. To support the improvements to the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, and incorporate statutory requirements, it has become evident that the Joint Appointment Committee's remit needs to be expanded to also deal with disciplinary action against, and the dismissal of, joint senior members of staff.
- 1.8 It is proposed that the Joint Appointments Committee's TOR be amended to deal with appointments, disciplinaries and dismissals of relevant officers, to reflect legislation. As such, the Committee will require a change of name to better reflect its new purpose, and it is proposed that it be known as the 'Joint Senior Staff Committee' (JSSC), rather than the 'Joint Appointments Committee' (JAC).

2. Recommendation to Council

The Standards and General Purposes Committee recommend to Council:

- 2.1 Subject to the agreement of Guildford Borough Council, that the new Officer Employment Procedure Rules, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report, be adopted into the Constitution**
- 2.2 Subject to the agreement of Guildford Borough Council, that the revised terms of reference for the Joint Appointments Committee and change of its name to "Joint Senior Staff Committee" to reflect its expanded responsibilities, as set out in Appendix 4 to this report, be adopted with immediate effect.**
- 2.3 That the Council confirms with immediate effect that the WBC membership of the Joint Senior Staff Committee, for the remainder of the 2023-24 municipal year, as being:**
- **Councillor Follows**
 - **Councillor Fairclough**
 - **Councillor Martin**

2.4 Subject to the agreement of Guildford Borough Council, that the Officer Scheme of Delegation be amended to authorise the Monitoring Officer to convene, where necessary, an Independent Panel, as provided for in the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, with immediate effect.

3. Reason for Recommendation:

3.1 To ensure that both GBC and WBC have adequate arrangements in place to deal with the employment of all officers including senior management and statutory officers. Approval of the new Officer Employment Procedure Rules will be the first step in the process to align the constitutions of GBC and WBC where appropriate to do so.

4. Exemption from publication

4.1 No part of this report is exempt from publication.

5. Purpose of Report

5.1 This report asks the Council:

- (a) To adopt the proposed new Officer Employment Procedure Rules.
- (b) To agree:
 - to authorise the Head of Paid Service to approve the Council's HR policies;
 - to rename the Joint Appointments Committee the "Joint Senior Staff Committee", approve its revised terms of reference, and confirm the GBC membership; and
 - to authorise the Monitoring Officer to convene, where necessary, an Independent Panel, as provided for in the new Officer Employment Procedure Rules.

6. Strategic Priorities

6.1 The collaboration between Guildford and Waverley assists in the delivery of both councils' corporate priorities.

7. Background

The Officer Employment Procedure Rules

- 7.1 The statutory officers of both councils, the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), the Section 151 Officer (Executive Head of Finance) and the Monitoring Officer (Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services), have duties to advise and protect the councils as corporate bodies. In carrying out their duties at times they may be required to provide advice to members that is not welcome or popular, or to take such action in connection with that advice in order to fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
- 7.2 Accordingly, these three statutory posts are protected by law under specific regulations from unwarranted political interference in carrying out their proper duties. In the event that disciplinary action is contemplated against a statutory officer, members will need to ensure that they understand the procedure to be used complies with the regulatory requirements and the relevant terms and conditions of employment.
- 7.3 The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2015 amended the previous legislation to change the statutory process for dismissing the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer (“the relevant officers”). Previously no disciplinary action could be taken against a relevant officer other than in accordance with a recommendation in a report made by a Designated Independent Person (DIP). The 2015 Regulations abolished the role of the DIP and outlined a new process to be followed and to be incorporated into Council constitutions.
- 7.4 The Model Disciplinary Procedure and Guidance which incorporate the relevant statutory requirements was nationally negotiated and agreed by the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Local Authority Chief Executives issued in October 2016. It was then incorporated into the contractual terms and conditions of employment for Local Authority Chief Executives.

7.5 Additionally, the August 2017 Chief Officers' JNC contains a modified procedure for Monitoring Officers and Section 151 Officer, indicating that the relevant provisions of the Chief Executives' Handbook can be used as a reference guide in such circumstances. This Model Procedure for Chief Executives has been adopted across England and it is now recommended that it should govern any future disciplinary procedures for the relevant Statutory Officers employed here.

Guildford and Waverley Borough Council Collaboration

- 7.6 Following the commitment by both Guildford and Waverley to collaborate and the establishment of a JMT, with the prospect of further collaborative proposals coming forward, the benefits of approving new Officer Employment Procedure Rules and related governance processes within the respective Constitutions, where appropriate to do so, are becoming increasingly apparent.
- 7.7 The current published version of WBC constitution lists the Officer Employment Procedure Rules in Part 4 (4.8), however there is a note advising that the section is under review. The previous version was removed in October 2022. This was initially due to the timing of the recruitment process of the JMT and was left under review with an update imminent.
- 7.8 The GBC Officer Employment Procedure rules can be found in Part 4, pages 77 - 94 of its constitution, it is a total of 17 pages. As part of the constitutions review process, Officers have compared both sections to guidance, best practice, and those of several other collaborating borough/district councils. In comparison the average length of the Officer Employment Procedure Rules is 6 pages, they also tend to be less descriptive and more succinct.
- 7.9 It was decided by both councils in April 2022 that all Statutory officers (The Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer) and the entire JMT would be employed directly by WBC. It is proposed that the new Officer Employment Procedure Rules, set out in **Appendix 1** to this report, will be included in the constitutions of both councils. The existing Officer Employment Procedure Rules in GBC's Constitution would be superseded by the new rules.

- 7.10 It will also be necessary for Guildford to formally disband its existing Employment Committee.
- 7.11 The terms of reference for the current Joint Appointments Committee are set out in **Appendix 2** to this report, the proposed changes are found as a tracked change version at **Appendix 3** and a clean copy of proposed changes can be found at **Appendix 4** to this report.

8. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 8.1 The Council must due regard to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) when making any recommendations concerning constitutional arrangements. There are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

10. Legal Implications

- 10.1 The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001, as amended, govern the appointment and disciplinary arrangements within a Local Authority relevant to senior officers.
- 10.2 Section 112 Local Government Act 1972 provides a Local authority with the power to appoint such officers as they think necessary for the proper discharge by the authority of their functions.

11. Human Resource Implications

- 11.1 The Human Resources implications for certain senior Officers of the Council are set out in the body of the report.

12. Background Papers

Waverley Borough Council Constitution
Guildford Borough Council Constitution
Minutes from the GBC Full Council meetings held on 5 April 2022
Minutes from the GBC Full Council meetings held on 26 April 2022

8 January 2024: Report to Waverley's Standards & General Purposes Committee

18 January 2024: Report to Corporate Governance & Standards Committee

13. Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Officer Employment Procedure Rules

Appendix 2: Current TOR for the Joint Appointments Committee

Appendix 3: Draft TOR for the Joint Senior Staff Committee (tracked change version)

Appendix 4: Draft TOR for the Joint Senior Staff Committee (clean version)