

Item No. 6.2	Classification: Open	Date: May 20 2009	Meeting Name: Council Assembly
Report title:		Review of Communication Protocol	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Legal and Democratic Services	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council Assembly agree the attached communication protocol at Appendix A.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The communication protocol was introduced in May 2004. This present review of the communication protocol is part of the overall review of the constitution carried out annually.
3. The Standards Committee have considered this revision of the communications protocol.
4. The revised communications protocol has been considered by Constitutional Steering Panel and the Standards Committee and their comments have been taken into account .

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. The suggested changes, which are underlined in the protocol, have resulted from queries that have arisen during the course of the year. Some parts of the member and officer protocol have been transferred [paragraphs 35 to 38 and 41 to 43].
6. Council will note that a new paragraph 8 has been inserted which replaces paragraph 63 of the member officer protocol setting out the rules for inviting ward councillors to events. Paragraph 9 extends the rules on official visits by government and shadow ministers. It outlines the arrangements to be made where the minister requires assistance or access to any of the council's services or facilities. This has been included to ensure that the purpose of all visits is identified in advance and that appropriate support is provided on the day.
7. Promotional publicity is dealt with at paragraph 13 of the protocol. It explains how promotional publicity can be used by the council under the legislation and that it must be objective and factual.
8. Council will note further that a new paragraph 15 has been inserted to deal with the publicity of matters going before the executive, council assembly or committees of the council. The standard requirement is that all matters are publicised five clear days before the meeting unless they have been adjudged exempt. Where the press becomes interested in a matter that is to be the subject of a decision by the council a press release may be issued by the relevant chief officer and executive member explaining the reasons behind the

recommendations. Any press release must be factual and objective.

If any misinformation has been given about the council's policies or objectives then the head of communications is authorised to take corrective measures as necessary.

9. The role and responsibilities of the mayor are set out at paragraph 32. This has been inserted to set out the functions of the mayor in promoting the council generally and representing the council in civic and ceremonial occasions.
10. The amendment in paragraph 34 has been added to allow the chair of audit and governance to comment on matters falling within the remit of that committee.
11. The amendments in paragraphs 39 and 40 dealing with mailshots are an attempt to remove the current ambiguity about the use of council resources. The revised provisions make clear how officers in member services will approach requests of this type from members.

Community Impact Statement

12. Good relationships between members and officers are very important in aiding the decision-making process and helping to boost public confidence in the Council. A protocol that defines each party's responsibilities creates certainty, which in turn leads to better decision-making and a more satisfied customer.

Legal Implications

13. The legal implications are included in the report.

Resource Implications

14. Any resource implications will be contained within existing budgets.

REASON FOR URGENCY

15. This review forms part of the constitution review process which will be considered by the annual meeting on May 20 2009. In order to allow the constitution to be updated in a timely and coherent way council is asked to consider adopting the protocol at its annual meeting. Consideration of the protocol will enable the revised document to be published with the other constitutional changes thus allowing any cross referencing issues to be fully identified. Any delay in considering the protocol would mean the updated protocol was not available to members and officers at a time when working arrangements are undergoing significant changes. The date of the next council assembly is pending confirmation by the annual meeting but is not expected to be until July 2009.

REASON FOR LATENESS

16. Following consideration by the constitutional steering panel on May 5, officers needed to make a number of adjustments to this and a related item on the agenda. Unfortunately these changes could not be completed in time for the agenda despatch.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
The Constitution.	Constitutional Team, Town Hall, Peckham Road, SE5 8UB	Lesley John 020-7525-7228

APPENDICES

No.	Item
A.	Communication Protocol

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Legal and Democratic Services	
Report Author	Norman Coombe, Principal lawyer	
Version	Final	
Dated	May 11 2009	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Legal and Democratic Services	Yes	Yes
Chief Finance Officer	No	No
Executive Member	N/a	N/a
Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services	May 11 2009	