

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 18TH APRIL, 2013

- Councillors Present:** Councillor Jessica Webb in the Chair
Cllr Geoff Taylor, Cllr Louisa Thomson and Cllr Patrick Vernon OBE
- Co-optees Present:** Julia Bennett, George Gross, Adedoja Labinjo, Onagete Louison and Elizabeth Coates-Thummel
- Officers in Attendance:** Gifty Edila (Corporate Director of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services), Robert Walker (Governance Services Officer) and Ian Williams (Corporate Director of Finance and Resources)
- Also in Attendance:** Jonathan Stopes-Roe (Independent Person)
- 1 Apologies for absence**
 - 1.1 Councillor Sophie Linden and Councillor Simche Steinberger.
 - 2 Declarations of interest**
 - 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.
 - 3 Minutes of the previous meeting - 21 January 2013**
 - 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21st January 2013 were approved as a true and accurate record.
 - 4 Guidance for Members on the use of ICT - 2nd Annual Report**
 - 4.1 Ian Williams, Corporate Director of Finance and Resources, introduced the 2nd Annual Report on Guidance for Members on the use of ICT. The Standards Committee had requested to receive annual reports on compliance with the Guidance for Members on Use of ICT, following the introduction of the Guidance in 2011 on recommendation of the Internal Audit on ethical governance.
 - 4.2 It was noted that there had been one breach during the 2012/13 municipal year, with one laptop being stolen.
 - 4.3 **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

5 Revision to the Members' Code of Conduct: Seven Principles of Public Life

- 5.1 Gifty Edila, Corporate Director of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services, introduced the report recommending that the seven principles of public life, as included in Appendix A to the Members' Code of Conduct, be revised in line with the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
- 5.2 Gifty Edila advised that the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life were summarised in section 6 of the report and the current and proposed new principles could be found in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report. The Committee on Standards in Public Life recommended updating the descriptions of the principles following a best practice review.
- 5.3 **RESOLVED** that Council be recommended to approve an amendment to the Members' Code of Conduct to incorporate the revised principles of public life, as attached in Appendix 2 of the report.

6 Standards Committee Annual Report 2012/13

- 6.1 Gifty Edila, Corporate Director of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services, introduced the draft Standards Committee Annual Report 2012/13 and gave an overview of the contents. Gifty Edila thanked the Committee for all its hard work over what had been a busy year following the introduction of changes under the Localism Act 2011. Thanks were also made to the Independent Person, Jonathan Stopes-Roe, for his assistance in handling complaints made against Members.
- 6.2 Gifty Edila advised during the presentation of the report that the Government had recently issued a guide on openness and transparency on personal interests, which she would forward to all Members. It was noted that the Government's guide was in keeping with the guidance previously issued by the Council.
- 6.3 The Committee noted that two co-optees of the Council had still not completed their register of interests form. Gifty Edila stated that although the two co-optees were not legally required to complete the form, they were not compliant with the Council's Code of Conduct. Gifty Edila advised that she would contact the co-optees again to ask them to complete and return their register of interests form.
- 6.4 Councillor Webb commented that it would be an important task for the Committee during the 2013/14 municipal year, to consider the Members induction training programme following the 2014 local elections to ensure that Members receive necessary training on the Code of Conduct and other ethical governance issues. Councillor Thomson suggested it would also be useful to involve backbench Councillors in developing the induction training schedule.
- 6.5 **RESOLVED** that the Committee's Annual Report for 2012/13 be commended to Council for noting, subject to the following amendments:
- i) section 7 of the report be amended to record the number of Members and co-optees who had attended Code of Conduct training sessions;

- ii) the second paragraph of section 6 be amended to specify that one complaint was upheld and reported to full Council, one complaint was resolved, and that three complaints were being progressed;
- iii) the first paragraph of section 12 of the report be amended to reflect that, although the Committee was pleased to see that the new framework had been successfully implemented, the Committee regretted the weakened ethical governance regime introduced by the Localism Act 2011.

7 Any other business which in the opinion of the Chair is urgent

7.1 Councillor Taylor commented that, given the number of other commitments which Members have, perhaps consideration could be given to cancel or postpone meetings where no item of business was urgent, or possibly even ask Members to comment on reports via email. Gifty Edila thanked Councillor Taylor for his feedback. Gifty Edila advised that the ongoing review of the Council’s governance arrangements was looking at the role and function of all committees and consideration was being given as to whether the number of Standards Committee meetings could be reduced.

Duration of the meeting: 6.30 - 7.00 pm

Signed

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Chair of Committee

Contact:
Robert Walker, Governance Services

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