

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 22ND JANUARY, 2014

- Councillors Present:** Councillor Sophie Linden in the Chair  
Cllr Geoff Taylor, Cllr Patrick Vernon OBE and  
Cllr Jessica Webb (Vice-Chair)
- Co optees Present:** George Gross, Adedoja Labinjo, Onagete Louison  
and Elizabeth Coates-Thummel
- Apologies:** Julia Bennett and Councillor Louisa Thomson
- Officers in Attendance:** Gifty Edila (Corporate Director of Legal, HR and  
Regulatory Services), Yinka Owa (Assistant  
Director Legal and Democratic Services) and  
Robert Walker (Governance Services Officer)
- Also in Attendance:** Jonathan Stopes-Roe (Independent Person)

### 1 Apologies for absence

- 1.1 As listed above.

### 2 Declarations of interests

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### 3 Minutes of the previous meeting - 4 November 2013

- 3.1 **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2013 be approved as a true and accurate record subject to an amendment to list Jonathan Stopes-Roe, Independent Person, as having been present at the meeting.

### 4 Standards Committee Hearing - Complaint against Cllr Brian Bell

- 4.1 Gifty Edila, Corporate Director of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services/Monitoring Officer, advised that Councillor Brian Bell had requested that the hearing be deferred. Gifty Edila explained to the Committee that she had received an email from Councillor Bell on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2014 advising that he could not attend the hearing due to illness.
- 4.2 **RESOLVED** that, in the absence of Councillor Brian Bell, consideration of the complaints be deferred.
- 4.3 Should the complaints not be resolved by the end of January to the satisfaction of the Monitoring Officer, the Committee agreed that an additional meeting would be scheduled to consider the complaints.

## 5 Review of the Register of Members' and Co-optees' Declaration of Interests Forms

- 5.1 Gifty Edila, Corporate Director of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services, introduced the report on the Annual Review of the Register of Members' and Co-optees' Declaration of Interests forms and provided an overview of the findings. Gifty Edila stated she was pleased to advise that all Members and Co-optees had completed their declaration of interests form and that many Members and Co-optees frequently updated their form as their circumstances changed.
- 5.2 The Chair and George Gross welcomed the findings that all Members and Co-optees were complying with requirements to declare their interests. The Committee noted that a review would be undertaken next year following the local elections in May 2014.
- 5.3 **RESOLVED** that the annual review of the Register of Members' and Co-optees' Declaration of Interests Forms be noted.

## 6 Revised Terms of Reference

- 6.1 The Chair advised that the Committee's terms of reference had been reviewed following Full Council's decision, as part of a governance review, to reduce the number of Standards Committee meetings to two scheduled meetings per year from the start of the 2014/15 Municipal Year. The Chair explained that ad-hoc Committee and Sub-Committee meetings would however, be arranged as necessary to consider complaints made under the Code of Conduct.
- 6.2 Gifty Edila, Corporate Director of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services, introduced the report which outlined the proposed changes to the Committee's terms of reference. Appended to the report was a document detailing in full the proposed changes and a commentary on the changes. Gifty Edila advised that the majority of the proposed changes were to make the terms of reference more concise.
- 6.3 Gifty Edila drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 3.5 of the report which explained the proposal to move the Committee's oversight of Corporate Complaints and Members' Enquiries to the Executive and Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission. A new clause was also proposed to be included in the revised terms of reference to clarify that the Committee was responsible for adopting its own procedures for considering complaints.
- 6.4 George Gross stated that it was with regret that it was proposed to withdraw Corporate Complaints and Members' Enquiries from the Committee explaining that he felt it was useful to have one body with oversight of these areas alongside ethical governance issues. The Chair advised that officers would be asked to email Standards Committee Members and Co-optees with any reports on Corporate Complaints and Members' Enquiries and advised that she was confident that the Mayor and Chair of the Governance and Resources Scrutiny Committee would be willing to be contacted by Members and Co-optees of Standards if they had any comments or queries on these reports.

6.5 **RESOLVED** that the report and the proposed new terms of reference, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be noted.

**7 Member Induction Programme 2014**

7.1 Gifty Edila, Corporate Director of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services introduced the report. Gifty Edila explained that officers were currently consulting on the draft Member Induction Programme. Code of Conduct training would be provided to all Members following the local elections in May 2014 and all Members and Co-optees of the Standards Committee would be invited to attend to contribute to the training sessions. Gifty Edila also advised that an independent agency had approached the Council offering training on ethical governance matters and that this was being considered as part of the training programme.

7.2 The Chair advised that it would be a priority to ensure that Members received training on the Code of Conduct as soon as possible following their election to office after the 2014 local elections, and that it would also be a priority to provide training to Members who were appointed to the Licensing Committee and Planning Sub-Committee.

7.3 The Chair questioned whether there could be any online training offered to Members in relation to the Code of Conduct to supplement the planned training sessions. Gifty Edila advised that the Council was in the process of developing a number of e-learning modules which it hoped to complete by the end of March. Gifty Edila advised that she would ask officers to develop a Code of Conduct e-learning module.

7.4 **RESOLVED** that the report and the draft Member Induction Programme 2014, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be noted.

**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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