

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 21ST JANUARY, 2016

- Councillors Present:** Councillor Sophie Linden in the Chair
Cllr Ben Hayhurst, Cllr Sally Mulready and
Cllr Clare Potter
- Co-optees Present:** Julia Bennett, George Gross and Adedoja Labinjo
- Apologies:** Onagete Louison
- Officers in Attendance:** Yinka Owa (Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services), Christine Peacock (Assistant Director ICT) 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 Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting - 15 July 2015

- 3.1 **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th July 2015 be approved as a true and accurate record.

- 3.2 Under matters arising, the Chair advised that:

- item 5, the Standards Committee Annual Report 2014/15 had been considered at the Full Council meeting held on 25th November 2015; and
- paragraph 7.11, following comments from the Standards Committee, guidance had been issued in November 2015 for Members on counter-signing forms for members of the public.

4 Guidance for Members on the Use of ICT - 5th Annual Report

- 4.1 Chris Peacock, Assistant Director of ICT, introduced the 5th annual report on Guidance for Members on the use of ICT. Chris Peacock stated she was pleased to advise that there had been no breaches of the guidance during the 2015/16 municipal year and that, since the Guidance had been issued in 2011, there had only been two breaches and that neither of these resulted in a data breach.

- 4.2 Chris Peacock explained to the Committee that, as detailed in paragraph 7 of the report, a review was still underway of the ICT equipment provided to Members. A small pilot group of Members were currently testing different laptops and tablets, and equipment in party groups' rooms had been updated.
- 4.3 Chris Peacock also updated the Committee that Members were now required to use a two-factor authentication method to access the Council's webmail externally in order to comply with security standards to connect to the Government's Public Service Network. A drop-in session to demonstrate the new log in process had been held prior to the Full Council meeting on 25th November 2015.
- 4.4 Following a question from Councillor Hayhurst, Chris Peacock explained that it was anticipated that the pilot of new equipment for Members would be completed and a new offer of equipment would be put to Members by the end of the financial year. The Chair explained that she and Cllr Munn, the lead Member for the review of ICT, would invite all Members to a meeting to discuss proposals once finalised.
- 4.5 **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

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

- 5.1 Yinka Owa, Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, introduced the report to the Committee on the annual review of the Register of Members' and Co-optees' declaration of interest forms. Yinka Owa explained that the review had revealed that all Members and Co-optees had completed and returned a register of interests form and that the majority of Members frequently updated their forms.
- 5.2 The Standards Committee noted that the review had however, identified that a small number of Members had not updated their forms since 2012. These Members had been written to and asked to review their forms and check them for accuracy.
- 5.3 **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

6 Update on Members Training and Development Programme

- 6.1 Yinka Owa, Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, introduced the report on the Members' Training and Development Programme.
- 6.2 Yinka Owa advised that a survey of the Programme had been undertaken in February 2015 to assess Members' training needs following the induction programme provided after the local elections in May 2014. Paragraph 1.5 of the report listed those areas which Members indicated that they were interested in receiving further training.
- 6.3 The Committee noted that the Programme for 2015/16 included 11 in-house training sessions as well some external training courses on specialised subjects

Thursday, 21st January, 2016

requested by Members. Generally training sessions were open to all Members of the Council unless they were sessions focussed on specific functions, such as training for Members of the Licensing Committee and Planning Sub-Committee. In addition, Yinka Owa explained that Members had been offered a range of e-learning courses and advised that Members were kept informed of training sessions through the weekly Members' newsletter.

- 6.4 Julia Bennett commented that the Programme seemed to be very comprehensive and well received by Members.
- 6.5 Councillor Mulready explained that she believed, as previously raised at Committee meetings, that training and support should be put in place for Members who may become ill or disabled whilst in office. She queried whether training could also be provided on disability awareness and safety awareness. With regard to the issue of safety awareness, Councillor Mulready believed this to be an important issue given that Members could occasionally be confronted by angry members of the public at ward surgeries etc and believed that risk assessments should be carried out.
- 6.6 The Chair noted Councillor Mulready's comments and asked officers to respond on these points prior to the next meeting of the Standards Committee. The Chair explained that Members had previously been invited to attend officer training on aggression and safety awareness however, she believed it may be necessary to hold further sessions for Members.
- 6.7 Councillor Webb explained that she had attended the aggression and safety awareness course and she believed it should form part of any future Members' induction training programme. She also believed that disability awareness training should be viewed as a core course for Members.
- 6.8 Yinka Owa noted Members observations and agreed to provide feedback to the Committee prior to its next meeting.
- 6.9 **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

7 Any other business

- 7.1 The Committee discussed recent Sub-Committee meetings and the role and engagement of the Independent Person. The Committee agreed that this should be a standard item at future meetings to allow discussion and the monitoring of processes for considering complaints with the Independent Person.

Duration of the meeting: 6.30 - 7.00 pm

Contact:

Robert Walker, Governance Services

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