

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2017

Councillors Present: Deputy Mayor Anntoinette Bramble (Chair), Councillor Katie Hanson, Councillor Ben Hayhurst, Councillor Sally Mulready, Councillor Clare Potter and Councillor Jessica Webb (Vice-Chair).

Co-optees Present: Julia Bennett, George Gross and Onagete Louison

Apologies: Councillor Clayeon McKenzie and Co-optee Adedoja Labinjo.

Officers in Attendance: Bruce Devile, Head of Governance & Business Intelligence
Tess Merrett, Governance Services Manager
Rob Miller, Director of ICT
Yinka Owa, Director of Legal
Gareth Sykes, Governance Services Officer

Also in Attendance: Jonathan Stopes-Roe (Independent Person)

1 Election of Chair of the remainder of the Municipal Year 2016-17

1.1 The Committee agreed the election of Deputy Mayor Anntoinette Bramble as Chair of the Standards Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2016-17.

2 Apologies for absence

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Clayeon McKenzie and Co-optee Adedoja Labinjo.

3 Declarations of interests

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of previous meeting

4.1 The committee agreed the minutes of the meeting of the previous Standards Committee meeting held on 21 July 2016.

- 4.2 Yinka Owa, Director of Legal, updated the committee on the current status of the work on the Council's whistleblowing policy. Yinka Owa advised members that the policy had not changed since 2014. The policy would be presented at the next Audit Committee meeting before being considered at the next Standards Committee meeting.

5 Annual Report on Compliance with Guidance on Members' Use of ICT

- 5.1 Rob Miller, Director of ICT, introduced the sixth annual report on members' use of ICT.
- 5.2 Committee members noted the table, at 6.6 in the report, that there had been one reported breach during the Municipal year of 2015/16.
- 5.3 Committee members noted the table, at section 6.7 in the paper. There had only been three known or reported breaches since the commencement of annual reporting to the Standards Committee in 2013.
- 5.4 Rob Miller informed Standards Committee members, under section 7, Refresh of the Council's Guidance for Members' uses of ICT, that the new Using Systems and Data policy will ensure that the Council's guidance is up to date with current systems and the latest UK Government guidance. The policy would also be reviewed to consolidate the number of policy documents and ensure that it is easy to understand for a non-technical audience.
- 5.5 Rob Miller stressed to the Committee members the need for the policy to strike the right balance between technical security measures and user responsibility, with a focus on helping to improve the Council's service delivery.
- 5.6 Rob Miller informed Standards Committee members that the revised policy had been designed to avoid adding disproportionate technical restrictions which can lead to people taking risks.
- 5.7 In addition to the ICT security guidance, the refreshed policy will include guidance on use of social media and reasonable use of services such as mobile data.
- 5.8 It was proposed to provide briefings to each political group to support Members in applying the new guidance to their Council work.
- 5.9 Rob Miller explained, in relation to the review of Members' ICT requirements that last year a pilot scheme had been run which had improved the ICT provision for Members. This scheme had recommended that Members should be offered a choice of upgrades, based on a choice of laptop or tablet. Rob Miller advised that most Members have now been issued with new equipment and the ICT team have received good feedback from users on the scheme.
- 5.10 Councillor Ben Hayhurst welcomed the report and the new policy as being accessible and easy to understand. He added that it was important to encourage all Members to come to the 'drop in' support sessions run by the ICT team and to remind Members

that any websites that they visited using Council-provided ICT equipment would be flagged up.

- 5.11 Rob Miller replied that training and support for Members were important but it was understood that it was difficult to arrange a time suit everyone because Members were very busy. The ICT team are introducing the facility to reserve bookable support slots and holding drop in advice sessions to make it easy to access support.
- 5.12 Councillor Ben Hayhurst enquired about the procedure for resetting passwords.
- 5.13 Rob Miller replied that the ICT team had followed the revised advice on resetting passwords outlined last year by GCHQ. It had recommended that organisations end the requirement for periodic resetting of users' passwords as this can actually lead to systems being secure due to users writing down their passwords. The Committee noted that this was the approach that had now been adopted across government.
- 5.14 Councillor Katie Hanson welcomed this approach, and felt that the previous approach risked totally defeating the purpose of keeping access secure. Cllr Hanson noted the importance of having an approach that reflects human behaviour e.g. forgetting or losing passwords.

6 Review of the Register of Members' and Co optees Declaration of Interests

- 6.1 Yinka Owa, Director of Legal, introduced the report. The Localism Act 2011 requires all local authorities to adopt a Code of Conduct for its elected Members and voting co-optees. The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 requires all Members to complete a declaration of interests form on their election to office, and of voting co-optees to complete a form on their appointment to office.
- 6.2 The Localism Act 2011 also places an obligation on all local authorities to promote high ethical standards in public office. Regulations also require Members and Co-optees to be transparent and declare all disclosable interests on their declaration of interest form.
- 6.3 The declaration of interest forms are held in a hard copy register and on the Council's website. Having reviewed the forms, the majority of Members have been keeping their forms updated. There is a small number of Councillors who have not updated their forms since 2014, they had been sent a reminder to send in an updated form if there had been any changes.
- 6.4 The Standards Committee noted the report.

7 Review of the Members' Training and Development Programme

- 7.1 Bruce Devile, Head of Governance and Business Intelligence, presented the report updating the Committee on the Members' Training and Development Programme. The programme's aim was to provide the necessary training and tools to Members to enable them to reach their full potential in their various roles as Councillors.

- 7.2 The change in approach had come about as a result of Mayor Philip Glanville's commitment last September to launch a review of how Councillors are supported. A fresh look at member training was about to be launched.
- 7.3 The training was now more focused with the emphasis on a more individual approach to training to meet Members' needs and aspirations. A dedicated Members training page was to be created. It would include links to all the main components, including the Local Government Association and Local Government and Intelligence Unit learning hub, dates of briefings and back to floor session, PDP templates and guidance, as well as key contacts.
- 7.4 Councillor Clare Potter explained that because of timings she was not always able to make the briefings and suggested that the slides from these sessions should be automatically circulated to Members.
- 7.5 Bruce Devile explained that with these briefings it was about trying to strike the best balance between getting the best attendance levels and holding them on dedicated nights.
- 7.6 Councillor Sally Mulready highlighted the need for effective training around resident or personal welfare.
- 7.7 Bruce Devile replied that annual reviews were conducted of the training and that the best advice was sought from the relevant authorities e.g. the Metropolitan Police.
- 7.8 Councillor Jessica Webb made some suggested additions to the areas of training for induction. It would be useful if training was made available on planning and licensing to all Councillors and that they were encouraged to attend. She commended the very good mental health and first aid training that had taken place recently.
- 7.9 Councillor Katie Hanson concurred that training in planning and licensing training would be useful.
- 7.10 Julia Bennett welcomed the review of the training and felt it was now much more comprehensive.
- 7.11 Councillor Ben Hayhurst commended the recent Mental Health workshop that had been run. He recommended that further mental health training should be rolled out as part of Councillors generic training.
- 7.12 The Chair re-iterated the comments from committee members that the new training programme was welcomed. Work would continue to keep improving ways to support Councillors in their professional and personal development.

8 Safety arrangements for Member surgeries

- 8.1 Bruce Devile, Head of Governance and Business Intelligence, presented the report, providing an update on Member safety, with particular regard to personal safety at ward surgeries. Hackney Council had spoken to other authorities for advice in this area to check whether any best or new practice was in place. No new or better practice was

found. Hackney Council had given individual support to members to address specific concerns or threats to safety and this was supported by the Police. This approach was set to continue.

- 8.2 The Committee noted that in order to address any concerns about venue safety for members' surgeries, a programme of risk assessment would start in early 2017. These would start with those venues where lone working takes place. If any issues arise from the risk assessment the Member Services team would work with the members concerned to put place in place as many measures as possible to negate these concerns.
- 8.3 On 17 January 2017 a training session for all members was run by the Police around safety at surgeries and terrorism threats with particular regard to those in public office. It also gave Members the opportunity to seek advice and ask questions from a police expert in this area.
- 8.4 Councillor Sally Mulready commented that risks were constantly changing and that sometimes the safety arrangements for Councillors alone at surgeries were unsatisfactory. Councillor Mulready queried what the position was of the Council in the event of an attack on a Councillor at a surgery.
- 8.5 Yinka Owa explained that that the Council would support the Councillor but insurance would not cover Councillors surgeries only Council-owned property. Any investigation into an attack on a Councillor would be led by the Police.
- 8.6 Councillor Katie Hanson commented that the position of ward surgeries was on the cusp of this issue. It was understood that it was not a Council property, however there was an obligation to ensure a duty of care. Health and Safety personnel needed to speak to Councillors and discuss what injuries are covered by insurance.
- 8.7 Yinka Owa reiterated that any work in this area would only relate to Council buildings.
- 8.8 Bruce Devile added that these issues were part of the larger overall work on member safety. Some work could be undertaken to have surgeries at 'safer' venues but that would move away from wards which is not what Members would want to do.
- 8.9 The Chair added that there was definitely a piece of work here to look into areas of liability and insurance for example. The Council did not want to do something after an incident had happened.
- 8.10 Councillor Sally Mulready recommended that these issues needed to be covered in the Councillors Handbook next year. It was also important that the handbook include a section on when Councillors become ill or have severe disabilities.
- 8.11 The Chair recommended that the Council should review how its Members hold their surgeries and provide them with information on this.
- 8.12 Bruce Devile replied that this was the kind of work that Members Services were working on at the moment. Any work would be tailored to individual members' needs. Specific cases would need to be assessed on case by case basis.

- 8.13 Councillor Ben Hayhurst added that there needed to be a level of proportionality on this issue, in order to avoid any overreaction, which could result in having the opposite effect of what was originally intended. There needed to be a degree of flexibility on what arrangements could be made.
- 8.14 Bruce Devile responded that Members services would not be issuing any stringent rules to members on this matter. Ultimately it would be up to Members to decide how safety arrangements were applied.
- 8.15 Councillor Jessica Webb suggested whether Members could utilise staff training sessions on health and safety.
- 8.16 Bruce Devile explained that they could look at joint training sessions but it would have to be appropriate, in order to ensure there was no potential conflicts of interest.
- 8.17 Councillor Katie Hanson added that kind of training may work but it was agreed that it needed to be at an appropriate level.

Duration of the meeting: 6.30pm – 7.15pm

Signed

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Chair of Committee

Contact: Gareth Sykes, Governance Services

STANDARDS COMMITTEE 15 FEBRUARY 2017 MEETING MINUTES

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Meeting finished at 7.15pm