

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE
DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19**

Introduction from Councillor Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the Committee for 2018/19 and Cabinet Member for ethical governance matters

This report provides an overview of the Committee's work in the 2018/19 Municipal Year, in what was the Committee's sixth year since its establishment by the Council following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011. This Annual Report outlines the key areas of work undertaken by the Committee during 2018/19 as well as looking at future work and challenges.

This is my third annual report since taking on responsibility for this Committee. I am happy to report that Members and co-opted members continue to uphold high ethical standards. I am also pleased to report that the refreshed Members' training programme which was launched in 2017/18 had positive feedback, and has continued to have a positive outcome since the local elections and influx of new members in May 2018.

It is yet again regrettable that the opposition parties decided not to take up their places on the Standards Committee for the 2018/19 Municipal Year. The Committee functions in an independent and non-party political way. It will continue to retain the place for the now sole opposition party for the duration of this new municipal administration in the hope that it will be taken up.

2. Membership

For 2018/19, membership of the Committee was as follows:

- Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Deputy Mayor, Elected Chair of the Committee.
- Originally arising from appointments at annual council May 2018 seven non-executive Council Members – Councillor Humaira Garasia, Katie Hanson, Alex Kuye, Anna Lynch, Sem Moema, Jessica Webb (vice-chair); and Caroline Woodley
- Two non-voting co-opted members – Adedoja Labinjo and Onagete Louison (plus two vacancies).
- There remained One Conservative vacancy on the committee.

The table below outlines Members' and co-optees' attendance at meetings of the Standards Committee meetings during the 2018/19 Municipal Year. As

ever, Members and co-optees had a large number of alternative commitments such as other public meetings, ward commitments, representing the Council on outside bodies and work commitments, and were therefore not always available to attend every meeting of the Committee

Member	02/07/18	18/02/19
Cllr Anntoinette Bramble	P	P
Cllr Garasia Humaira	P	P
Cllr Katie Hanson	P	A
Cllr Alex Kuye	A	N/A
Adedoja Labinjo	P	P
Onagete Louison	P	P
Cllr Anna Lynch	P	P
Cllr Sem Moema	P	P
Jonathan Stopes-Roe	P	P
Cllr Jessica Webb (Vice Chair)	P	P
Cllr Caroline Woodley	P	A

Key:

P = Present

A = Apologies for absence

N = Not required to attend

3. Terms of reference 2018/19

The Standards Committee operated within the following terms of reference for 2018/19 Municipal Year, which went to the Standards Committee meeting on 10 July 2017:

The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high ethical standards at the Council. The Standards Committee is responsible for the following functions:

1. To review and maintain oversight of the Council's ethical framework and procedures and make reports and recommendations accordingly;
2. To review and maintain oversight of the conduct of Members and co-opted members of the Council and assist them in upholding high ethical standards;
3. To advise Full Council and its Committees on the adoption of a Members' Code of Conduct, codes of practice and protocols relating to ethical governance matters;
4. To hear and consider complaints made against Members and co-opted members under the Code of Conduct, codes of practice or protocols;
5. To adopt procedures for considering complaints made under the Code of Conduct, codes of practice or protocols;
6. To consider whether to grant applications for dispensation to Members and co-opted members, in accordance with Members' Code of Conduct; and
7. To maintain oversight of ethical governance training provided to Members and co-opted members and make reports and recommendations accordingly.

4. Members' Code of Conduct

Following the Municipal Elections in May 2018 all Members on their election to office, and co-optees on their appointment, were required to sign a declaration confirming that they will abide by the Members' Code of Conduct. It is important for them to have good knowledge of the requirements of the Code. Similarly, officers who work directly with Members and co-optees need to have a good understanding of the Code in order to give Members effective support.

The Committee is pleased with the continuing support and training provided to Members on the Code of Conduct and believes that it helps contribute to the high ethical governance standards demonstrated by Members and Co-optees of the Council. Newly elected and returning Members, and Co-opted Members where appropriate, attended refresher sessions during the Municipal Year 2018/19. The Committee will continue to monitor training on the Code of Conduct to ensure that high standards continue.

5. Member Induction, Training and Development Programme

The refreshed Member Training and Development Programme received positive feedback. 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. The change in approach had come about as a result of Mayor Philip Glanville's commitment in 2017 to launch a review of how Councillors are supported. The training has now more focus with the emphasis on a more individual approach to training to meet Members' needs and aspirations. A dedicated Members' training page was created and is live. It includes 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.

Committee members welcomed the new training programme. Work would continue to improve the various ways to support Councillors in their professional and personal development.

A Members Induction Event which was held following the election in May 2018. Members were invited to attend the Town Hall to meet and engage with Directors, senior staff and key officers from services across the Council. The event provided an opportunity for new and returning members to network, gain information and updates from services and an insight into the key projects taking place.

A number of courses have been run for the 2018/2019 Municipal year. The emphasis with newly elected Councillors was and continues to provide the necessary training and tools to members to enable them to reach their full potential in their various roles as councillors. As launched in 2017 the training 'offer' has continued to focus on a more bespoke and individual approach to training to meet individual needs and aspirations.

The dedicated members training web page had been introduced to ensure all the relevant information was easily accessible and in one place. This has included links to all the main components such as LGA/LGIU & the learning hub, dates of briefings, PDP templates and guidance, as well as key contacts. It will continue to be the main landing page for all training and development for members and they should be able to find either the information or a link to it.

In 2018/19 as part of our commitment we have also focused on the particular needs of new Members and support in their role. Induction programmes were run at the start of each term of office with additional one off introductory sessions run when needed. Where new councillors started during administrations following by elections, particular attention was needed to be given to these members to ensure they were able to start their role as fully and as quickly as possible as the cycle of council meetings normally did not break for by elections.

We also continued through the year to assess the effectiveness of the training programme. In February of this year when assessing the progress so far we commented on the following issues which officers have continued to review and assess:

- Clear guidance on mandatory and non-mandatory training
- Refresher courses on annual basis i.e code of conduct, and declarations/register of interests
- training courses that could be offered on a collective, individual or online basis
- An ability to record an absence where a date was offered and a member was unable to attend through a previously arranged other commitment
- The timing of training courses and review of commence time with possible training sessions in a morning or lunch time
- Possible 1:1 sessions and walk in mornings or evenings
- Possibly other locations other than the Town Hall
- The concerns of co-opted members of the lack of guidance and training, and the need for better understanding and invitation to co-opted members for both mandatory/non mandatory training sessions in future

6. Review of Register of Declaration of Interests Forms

We have continued to review the requirements of the The Localism Act 2011 and the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 which requires all local authorities to adopt a Code of Conduct and for all its all Members and voting co-optees to complete and return a declaration of interests form.

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.

The declaration of interests forms were held in a hard copy register and on the Council's website as well. Following on from the Municipal election in May 2018, all elected Members were required to complete an ROI form within 28

days of taking up office. Our Governance and Member Services ensured that this was done. We have agreed that quarterly email be sent from our member services to remind members to review and update their form and advise Governance Services accordingly. It had been common practice to also keep Members updated as and when necessary, on case law relating to declarations of interest. Following on from the election in May 2018 all Members of the Council were required to, and attended mandatory training on the Members Code of Conduct.

We have also been advised of and updated on the review by Central Government in early 2018 of standards in public life in England and Wales, as defined in the Localism Act 2011, the key findings and recommendations of that review were published on 30 January 2019. We noted that it is likely that the review findings, if brought into effect by central government, would require revisions to Localism Act 2011, and subsequently revisions will be required to the existing Members Code of Conduct. We have agreed to receive a further report in the early summer of 2019, following an in-depth review of the key findings and their implications.

We have also commented that in terms of declaring interests on the RoI and the assumption that it is always safer to declare a matter rather than not and that by not doing so a member may then find that they were 'politically' exposed. We noted advice that if there were doubts or ambiguities then Members should always seek clarification, via both Governance Services and the Director of legal and Governance.

7. Complaints about Member Conduct

Jonathan Stopes-Roe has continued to serve as the Council's Independent Person on ethical governance matters and he was reappointed by Full Council for a further 4 year term at its meeting on 26 July 2017.

There were no complaints received under the Members' Code of Conduct that were referred to the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee in the 2018/2019 Municipal Year.

8. Guidance for Members on Use of ICT – Annual Report

Throughout 2018/19 communications were provided to members to support them in compliance with the requirements for use of Council ICT systems. These included:

- Notification about new Using Systems and Data policy, invitation to attend Data Protection guidance sessions for members and contact details for queries
- Information about registration of Members as Data Controllers with the Information Commissioner's Office
- Invitation to attend ICT support and advice sessions

The Standards Committee noted that guidance sessions had been offered to all members through 2018 to support them in their understanding of Data Protection responsibilities. Feedback from these sessions had been positive and they had provided officers with additional understanding of members' work and helped to identify those ways that needed further improvement.

On data protection, the Standards Committee members noted that the Council had arranged to register each Member as a 'Data Controller' with the Information Commissioner's Office. This was a mandatory requirement for all Members and was renewed by the Council following the election in May 2018 and annually thereafter to ensure that Members' registration remains up to date.

We have noted that following the municipal elections in May 2018 all Members were contacted to arrange appointments for setting new Members up with ICT access and to arrange the transfer of returning Members onto the Council's new email and productivity systems (based on Google G Suite). ICT Services team participated in the Members' Induction event to help inform Members about the services and support provided. We noted that as of February 2019 the process to complete the migration to the Council's new email service and / or security updates to laptop computers was in its final stages with only a small number of members awaiting the migration process. We also noted that a further 22 Members had iPads which had not yet been updated to the Council's new device management standard. As these already had security controls in place which allowed remote deletion of data in the event of a device being lost

or stolen this will be addressed as part of the planned refresh of Members' ICT hardware.

We have also noted that with regard to the monitoring of compliance with the guidance for Members' use of ICT there were no incidents relating to Members' use of the Council's ICT systems recorded during the 2018/19 calendar year.

We have been updated in respect of the planned refresh of Members' ICT hardware the ICT equipment provided to all Members was based on the findings of a pilot of upgraded ICT equipment in early 2016, when Members were given a choice of either being provided with a laptop PC or iPad, with Members who preferred to use their own equipment being able to do so. The same model was used for new Members joining the Council following the municipal election in 2018. Members would continue to have access to the Council's free wifi service which provided fast, consistent wifi across the core Council campus (Hackney Town Hall, Hackney Service Centre, Annex and Christopher Addison House).

We also were updated in February that ICT support and advice sessions were now offered was now based on access to telephone, online and bookable 1:1 support, following the initial roll out of the training offer in July 2018.

We have further been advised that outline recommendations for future changes to Members' ICT provision were considered at the Member Reference Group in November 2018. Members' feedback would now be used to inform the direction taken for proposed hardware upgrades later in 2019, and the devices that the Council had provided for Members (laptop PCs or iPads) would be refreshed as a full upgrade for all Members. Members would continue to be offered a choice of iPad or laptop devices.

In welcoming the ICT updates we commented particularly on the timing and location of the roll out of the proposed training, to ensure accessibility and full participation, and take up by all Members, and we have asked that officers take account of this during the scheduling of the proposed roll out.

9. Dispensation Requests

Under the Council's dispensation Procedure, the Standards Committee is responsible for considering requests for dispensations on the grounds that it is in the interests of residents or that it is otherwise appropriate to grant dispensation for some other reason.

We agreed in July 2018 to a dispensation for all Members to withhold their private addresses from the published Register of Interest Forms on the London Borough of Hackney's website.

10. Review of the Member complaints process and form/toolkit

In February this year (2019) we considered the findings of the review of the Member complaints process and form/toolkit, which we agreed to undertake in July 2018.

Under the requirements of Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 Hackney Council had arrangements in place to investigate complaints made against Members under the Members' Code of Conduct. The Localism Act 2011 placed an obligation on the Council to ensure that high ethical standards were promoted and maintained among its Members.

As part of the review findings, we agreed some revisions to the documents we publish on line regarding the Member complaints process, particularly in respect of the flowchart of the process to be included to assist officers and members of the public in following the process through.

We also agreed to include:

- outcomes as regards to findings of investigations
- whether the complaint findings warrant consideration by a Review Committee
- possible outcomes/decision of the Review Committee
- Informing the subject member and advertising/reporting of the decision to Full Council

11. Committee of Standards in Public Life

The Government's Committee of Standards in Public Life went out to consultation on Local Government Ethical Standards in early 2018. The consultation closed in late 2018 and in February this year we were advised of the findings and recommendations on ethical standards in local government.

We noted that the main headline findings of the report were:

- a new power for local authorities to suspend councillors without allowances for up to six months
- revised rules on declaring interests, gifts and hospitality
- local authorities retain ownership of their own Codes of Conduct
- a right of appeal *for suspended councillors to the Local Government Ombudsman*
- a strengthened role for the Independent Person
- greater transparency about the number and nature of Code complaints.

We have agreed to have further discussion in June of this year after officers have had time to evaluate the findings and recommendations so that the Council will be prepared for their implementation once the recommendations come in to being.

We have noted that given the Government's current legislative timetable it is unlikely that this would hit statute until early 2020 at the earliest, however but we feel that it is of considerable benefit to work on the implications of the key findings at this juncture.

12. Conclusion

The Standards Committee has now been in operation for seven years following its establishment by Council. The Committee remains dedicated to maintaining high ethical standards in Hackney and supporting Members and co-optees in doing so. The Committee is pleased to see that the current framework is operating successfully and the Committee believes that Council Members and co-optees continue to demonstrate high ethical standards.

The Committee's ongoing focus will be to support Members to ensure that they are fully aware of the principles of the Code of Conduct and to monitor attendance at training and completion of Register of Interests' forms.

I thank the two co-optees of the Committee for their assistance and hard work on the Committee and the Independent Person, Mr Jonathan Stopes-Roe, for his contribution to our work.

Councillor Anntoinette Bramble
Chair of Standards Committee 2018/19