

Appendix 1

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

1. Introduction from Councillor Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the Committee for 2019/20 and Deputy Mayor & Cabinet Member for ethical governance matters

This report provides an overview of the Committee's work in the 2019/20 Municipal Year, in what was the Committee's eight 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 2019/20 as well as looking at future work and challenges.

This is my fourth 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 continued to have 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 2019/20 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 2019/20, 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 2019 seven non-executive Council Members – Councillor Soraya Adejare, Humaira Garasia, Katie Hanson, Anna Lynch, Sem Moema, Jessica Webb (vice-chair); and one executive member - Carole Williams

- Two non-voting co-opted members – Adedoja Labinjo and Onagete Louison, and two newly appointed co-optees from 22 January 2020 – Nicola Hanns & Aoife Scannell (plus two vacancies).
- Independent Person – Jonathan Stopes-Roe
- 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 2019/20 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	16/09/19	13/01/20 (Special)	13/02/20
Cllr Anntoinette Bramble	P	P	P
Cllr Soraya Adejare	A	P	P
Cllr Garasia Humaira	P	P	A
Cllr Katie Hanson	P	P	A
Nicola Hanns	Not appointed until 22/01/20	Not appointed until 22/01/20	P
Adedoja Labinjo	A	P	A
Onagete Louison	P	A	A
Cllr Anna Lynch	P	P	P
Cllr Sem Moema	A	A	P
Aoife Scannell	Not appointed until 22/01/20	Not appointed until 22/01/20	P
Jonathan Stopes-Roe	P	P	A

Cllr Jessica Webb (Vice Chair)	P	P	P
Cllr Carol Williams	P	P	P

Key:

P = Present

A = Apologies for absence

N = Not required to attend

3. Terms of reference 2019/20

The Standards Committee operated within the following terms of reference for 2019/20 Municipal Year, which went to the Standards Committee meeting on 16 September 2019:

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 2019/20. The

Committee will continue to monitor training on the Code of Conduct to ensure that high standards continue.

5. 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 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.

In further discussions of the report on 16 September on Standards in public life (see 9 below) we discussed declaring interests on the Rol. Arising from the discussions it had become evident that a review of the actual Rol form was required in order to review its contents and explanations of to complete the form as it was felt that this had was not particularly helpful and user friendly.

As a result a member/officer 'one off' meeting took place on 11 November 2019 – comprising of our Councillor Lynch, the Head of Legal & Governance, and the Governance Officer to the Committee, which undertook a robust in-depth review of the existing form in comparison to that of two other London Local Authorities.

As a result of the in-depth review the findings were reported back to our Standards Committee on 13 February 2020 with recommendations for the adoption a revised Rol form – these findings and revisions where wholly welcomed by our Committee and approved for adoption for use from the commencement of the Municipal Year 2020/21. However due to the current crisis the form will be phased in for use during the summer/autumn of 2020.

6. 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 2019/2020 Municipal Year.

7. 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 on 16 September 2019 to a dispensation for any member of the Council belonging to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

8. Appointment of Co-opted Members to current vacancies on the Standards Committee

Our Standards Committee at our meeting on 16 September 2019 considered and agreed to the recruitment process for appointing to the four Co-opted Member vacancies on our Standards Committee – in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and the requirement to have up to six co-opted members on a Local Authority's Standards Committee. We also agreed to an Interview Panel for interviews consisting of two members of the Committee and myself in a voting capacity, and in a non voting capacity one of the two existing Co-opted Members, and the Independent Person to the Committee.

In agreeing to the recruitment process an advert appeared in the local press and on the Council's website on 19 September. A closing date was set for 22 October, and following assessment of applications the interview panel convened on 11 November. As a result of interviewing those shortlisted candidates the Panel recommended to the Standards Committee the appointment of two candidates.

The Standards Committee on 13 January 2020 confirmed the appointments for approval by Full Council, and in accordance with requirements for appointment of Standards Committee Co-optees (as defined in the Localism Act 2011) Full Council on 22 January 2020 endorsed the appointment of Nicola Hanns and Aoife Scannell as Co-opted Members to Standards for a four year term to January 2024.

Our newly appointed Co-opted Members attended their first meeting on 13 February 2020.

9. 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 of 2019 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 considered on 16 September 2019 an in-depth update report on progress with the findings of the review noting that it was likely that these, when brought into effect by central government, would require revisions to primary legislation – mainly the 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 2020 on any progress in respect of the proposed amendments to primary legislation.

We would also feel it should be noted that given the current pandemic situation, together with other pressing legislative issues it is unlikely that this would hit statute until later in 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.

10. Further non primary legislation changes in relation to recommendations in respect of Best Practice arising from the findings of Committee of Standards in Public Life

As part of the findings of the Committee of Standards in Public Life review it was recommended that Local Authorities and Parish/District Councils carry out a review of best practice in respect of their existing Members Codes of Conduct.

There were fifteen recommendations arising from the review to consider (see attached appendix 2) prior to and not requiring changes to primary legislation in respect of best practice – thirteen of fifteen the applicable to Local authorities, and two further specific to District and Parish Councils. As a result our Monitoring Officer has carried out an in-depth review, and as a result these findings were reported to our Standards Committee on 13 February 2020. Of the thirteen recommended practices our Authority had already implemented twelve of these within its current code, with only one partially met – as a result our Standards Committee have recommended to Full Council (elsewhere in this meeting) the update of the code to ensure full compliance with this partially met recommendation.

11. Conclusion

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

Our 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 wish to thank the two existing and two newly appointed 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 2019/20