

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 12 JULY 2022 AT 6:30PM

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HACKNEY TOWN HALL

THIS MEETING WAS LIVE STREAMED AND CAN BE VIEWED HERE:

https://youtu.be/16EhmsDtW_U

Councillors Present:	Deputy Mayor Anntoinette Bramble in the Chair Cllr Anna Lynch, Cllr Sade Etti, Cllr Joseph Ogundemuren and Cllr Lynne Troughton
Co-optees Present	Nicola Harris and Aoife Scannell
Independent Person:	Feryal Ertan
Officers in Attendance:	Dawn Carter-McDonald (Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services) Peter Gray (Governance Officer) Louise Humphreys (Head of Legal and Governance) Rob Miller (Strategic Director, Customer Services and Workplace)

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Frank Baffour.

2. Declarations of Interest - Members to declare as appropriate

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 16 February 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 February 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

4. Standards Committee Terms of Reference and Work Programme for 2022 /2023

- 4.1 The Chair introduced the item and confirmed that there had been no changes to the terms of reference.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report be noted;
2. That the work programme for 2022/2023 as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report be approved.

5. Members Use of ICT - 11th Annual Report

- 5.1 The Chair introduced the report, thanking staff for the work carried out during the pandemic to ensure that meetings of the Council could continue to be held. The Chair noted that Hackney Council was one of the first Councils to hold online meetings, ensuring that residents could participate in meetings, or view them via a livestream. The Chair confirmed that meetings would continue to be delivered both in person and virtually, in compliance with the law, alongside live streaming.

- 5.2 The Strategic Director of Customer Services and Workplace highlighted the following:

- That there had been no breaches in relation to Members use of IT over the past calendar year;
- Work was ongoing with the Council's Member Services Section to refresh Member Data Protection training;
- The IT equipment offer to Members remained the same;
- Since the cyber attack the Council's committee papers system (Mod.Gov) had been recovered with all files now available online;
- There had been further improvements to virtual meetings with less intrusive equipment now installed in meeting rooms;
- Further work was necessary on costings to enhance the 'hybrid' committee meeting equipment;
- A further 158 Council meetings had been held over the past year;
- Due to the decision to move to Cloud-based Services, Council Members' access to communication tools had not been interrupted by the cyber attack.

- 5.3 The Chair asked for a timescale for the work to enhance hybrid committee meetings. She asked for progress on recovery from the cyber attack, stressing the continued impact on residents and the importance of communicating with the Community on progress as this matter continued to be a challenge.

- 5.4 In reply, the Strategic Director of Customer Services and Workplace advised that:

- There were no timescales for work around hybrid meetings at present. Detailed survey work had been completed, providing the necessary information for planning;
- A detailed update on the cyber attack was being prepared for all members;
- There was continued communication with residents in regard to progress on recovery following the cyber attack;
- The backlog of new benefits claims and changes of circumstances was now largely cleared. Further work was required in more complex cases;
- It was anticipated that the Benefits Service would operate as normal by the end of the calendar year. The service was currently operating on longer processing times;
- The Land Searches Team had successfully addressed the backlog in land searches, working well with mortgage lenders to ensure that transactions could go forward with indemnities;
- Significant progress had been made on housing repairs;
- There was a focus on the needs of residents and a determination in the teams concerned to address difficulties.

5.5 Councillor Troughton asked whether there was indemnity covering personal liability for fines in circumstances where there was a breach of the Data Protection Act. The Director of Customer Services and Workplace agreed to consult Member Services on this matter.

Action: The Strategic Director of Customer Services and Workplace

5.6 Councillor Etti asked for details of upcoming 'online data awareness' training. The Strategic Director, Customer Services and Workplace reported that returning members had undertaken training in this area in the past two years. He agreed to update members on the dates of forthcoming training.

Action: The Strategic Director of Customer Services and Workplace

5.7 Nicola Harris asked if members' conduct in the use of digital tools was included in training provided.

5.8 The Head of Legal and Governance confirmed that the use of digital tools did form part of mandatory Code of Conduct training provided to members following the introduction of the new Code after the local elections. The training had centred on how the requirements of the Code interacted with the use of social media.

5.9 Councillor Lynch and the Chair referred to the excellent training provided to Members on the Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the update on Members' use of ICT, Data Protection training and the provision of ICT equipment for Members.

2. To note the continued use of virtual committee meetings and live streaming, and the steps being taken to support hybrid committee meetings.
3. To note the update on the impacts of the cyber attack on Members' use of ICT.

6. Standards Committee Annual Report 2021/2022

- 6.1 The Chair congratulated the Legal and Governance Team on winning the Recruiting Diverse Talent award at the UK Diversity Legal Awards 2021.
- 6.2 The Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services introduced the report, highlighting the following:
 - The importance of good standards in public life;
 - The work undertaken by the committee during the year, including work carried out by the Task and Finish Group on the introduction of the new Councillor Code of Conduct;
 - The declarations of interest form and the form relating to the declaration of gifts and hospitality had both been reviewed and were now more easily accessible and transparent;
 - To thank the Independent Person, Feryal Ertan, for her work and advice on complaints received in 2021/22. 14 complaints had been received. 1 complaint had been withdrawn with another complaint not pursued because of a lack of information provided. None of the complaints met the threshold for investigation.
- 6.3 Nicola Harris asked whether any themes emerged from the complaints received.
- 6.4 The Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services reported that those trends that emerged centred on posts on social media and that this was a focal point for member training with an emphasis on how these could be viewed by the wider public.
- 6.5 The Chair thanked all concerned for their continued work in this area and to Councillor Lynch for volunteering on the Working Group. The Chair told the Committee that she was Deputy Chair of the Local Government Association Board but had no role in forming the principles and guidance in the Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Report for 2021/2022 be endorsed and submitted to Full Council.

7. Any Other Business that the Chair Considers Urgent

- 7.1 There was no urgent business.

End of meeting

Duration of the meeting: 6:30pm – 7:00pm

Chair: Deputy Mayor Anntoinette Bramble
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Contact:

Peter Gray

Governance Officer

peter.gray@hackney.gov.uk