



City of Westminster

Minutes

Meeting:

Standards Committee

Date of meeting:

6.30pm on Monday 2 March 2009, Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP

Attendees:

Councillors:

Michael Brahams, DL

Ruth Bush

Robert Davis

Tim Mitchell

Alastair Moss

Steve Summers

Independent Members:

Lord Richard Best, OBE

The Very Rev John Hall

Elizabeth Peace, CBE

Lord Dennis Stevenson, CBE

Apologies:

Councillor: Angela Hooper, DL, CBE

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1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Robert Davis declared that he would leave the meeting for the consideration of Item 7 in view of the prejudicial interest he had in that item.

2. MINUTES

The Chairman, with the assent of the Members present, signed the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2009 as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

3. OVERVIEW OF ETHICAL STANDARDS AND RELATED MATTERS (see report of the Head of Legal Services, Strategic Director of Resources and the Director of Finance)

3.1 Peter Large, the Head of Legal Services, introduced the report. He and representatives of other departments who had contributed to the report responded to questions from Members of the Committee.

3.2 The Committee asked if complaints made in accordance with the Whistleblowing policy could be referred directly to the Chairman of the Standards Committee. Officers undertook to consider how this could be included in the material which supports the policy.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the annual report be noted and the actions taken and proposed be endorsed including that set out in paragraph 3.2 above.
- (ii) That the Committee endorse the conclusions set out in paragraph 7 of the report.
- (iii) That the report be circulated to all Members of the Council with a covering letter from the Chairman of the Committee.
- (iv) That for the reasons set out in paragraph 3.6 of the report the next full annual report be submitted in the Committee in July 2010 with key issues being submitted as necessary in the meantime and the Annual Governance Statement being reported to the Standards Committee on 14 July 2009.

4. ETHICAL GOVERNANCE AUDIT: FOLLOW UP (see report of the Head of Legal Services)

4.1 The Head of Legal Services introduced the report. He explained that the General Purposes Committee had asked the Standards Committee to undertake the responsibility for the work associated with the follow up audit. Subject to the Committee agreeing to do so he asked the Committee to consider the suggested audit approach set out on page 30 of the agenda paper, which would include feedback to the Committee by the Lead Auditor.

- 4.2 Concern was expressed at the length of the proposed diagnostic survey and the Head of Legal Services undertook to discuss this with the Lead Auditor as part of discussions on the detailed arrangements.

Resolved:

1. That the Committee confirm that it is willing to undertake the responsibility for the work associated with the Ethical Governance follow up audit.
2. That the Head of Legal Services be authorised to conclude the arrangements for the audit with the Audit Commission in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee broadly in line with the audit brief having regard to the views of the Committee set out above.

5. WORK PROGRAMME (see report of the Head of Legal Services)

- 5.1 The Head of Legal Services advised that following from earlier decisions it was necessary to make adjustments to the proposed work programme. Accordingly, the work programme should read, as follows:

14 July 2009

- (a) Report on the outcome of the follow-up Ethical Governance Audit.
- (b) Protocol for the consideration of reports for dispensations from the Members Code of Conduct.
- (c) Report on the Standards Board of England's Annual Assembly.
- (d) Annual Governance Statement.

27 October 2009

- (a) Report on Politically Restricted Posts.
- (b) Interim Report on Ethical Governance issues.

11 March 2010

- (a) Report on the Induction Arrangements for Councillors following the May 2010 City Council elections.

Resolved: That the Work Programme, set out above, be endorsed.

6. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS ON THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE (see report of the Head of Legal Services)

Resolved: That the report be noted.

7. REVIEW OF PROTOCOL RELATING TO CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (see report of the Head of Legal Services)

Councillor Robert Davis, having declared a prejudicial interest, left the meeting for this item.

- 7.1 The Head of Legal Services gave a full and detailed introduction to the report and explained that it had been submitted as the protocol previously endorsed by the Committee had become outdated as Sir Simon Milton was no longer a Councillor and his role as a Deputy Mayor for London had been clarified.

Resolved: That the revised protocol set out in Appendix 2 of the report be noted and approved.

8. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 7.28pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATE