



City of Westminster

Minutes

Meeting:

Standards Committee

Date of meeting:

6.15pm on Wednesday 17 March 2010, Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP

Attendees:

Councillors:

Michael Brahams, DL

Ruth Bush

Robert Davis, DL

Tim Mitchell

Alastair Moss

Steve Summers

Independent Members:

Lord Richard Best, OBE

The Very Rev Dr John Hall

Apologies:

Elizabeth Peace, CBE

Lord Dennis Stevenson, CBE

Councillor Rupert D'Cruz

Councillor Angela Hooper, DL, CBE

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1. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

- 1.1 There were no changes to the Membership. Apologies for absence received from Councillors D'Cruz and Hooper and Lord Stevenson and Mrs Peace.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15 February 2010 were approved, subject to correcting the spelling of Councillor Davis' name on Page 1, for signature by the Chairman as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

4. MEMBERS' INDUCTION PROGRAMME – MAY 2010 (see report of the Head of Members' Services)

- 4.1 Sam Mowbray, Head of Members' Services introduced the report and stressed that the training on governance with Peter Large would be a mandatory session for all new Councillors and be held prior to the reception with the Lord Mayor. She outlined the way in which the workshops would operate and the more informal approach, for example, use of ward walks being used.
- 4.2 Consultation on the proposed programme was, she added, to be undertaken with new Members. Councillor Davis also asked to be consulted.
- 4.3 Members asked that Planning and Licensing training be included for all Members not just for those on these Committees in view of the involvement all Members have in these areas. Whilst it was noted that these sessions would be led by the service areas Peter Large indicated that he would also expect to be involved in them.
- 4.4 Members also asked that consideration be given to producing a pocket diary size guide induction booklet. Also that "green" issues be included in the programme. They also asked that the role of the ward Member be reflected.

Resolved:

That the proposals detailed in Appendix A and Appendix B of the report for the induction of Councillors generally and specifically in respect of the Members Code of Conduct be endorsed subject to the views of the Committee as set out in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.4 above being considered for inclusion.

5. REVIEW OF PROCESSES RELATING TO THE CONSIDERATION OF COMPLAINTS (see report of the Head of Legal Services)

- 5.1 Peter Large, Head of Legal Services, introduced the report. He explained that the review was based on the experience of the two cases which had been dealt with by the Standards Sub-Committees as well as national statistics.
- 5.2 Members noted the data as set out in the report and highlighted by Mr Large which indicated that most of the complaints were rejected by the Assessment Sub-Committee.
- 5.3 Councillor Davis asked that the timescales for the whole process be reviewed with a view to reducing the overall time taken to complete the process. Mr Large explained that the timetable was based on the statutory requirements. The time taken to conclude the cases had been reviewed and found to have been well within the time allowed. Councillor Davis said that the stress involved for the Member made it imperative that the timings were reduced and may mean Committee Members being flexible over diary commitments.
- 5.4 Councillor Bush asked that consistent terminology be used.
- 5.5 Councillor Mitchell stressed that it would be important for the Committee to respond to the consultation which would be launched by an incoming Government on proposed changes.
- 5.6 Councillor Moss asked that the criteria be clarified so that it was clear that the Hearing Sub-Committee can say that no further action is necessary.

Resolved: (1) That the assessment criteria for the assessment of local Member complaints attached to the report be approved and the Head of Legal Services be authorised to make the necessary changes to reflect the changes set out in paragraphs 5.4 and 5.6 above.

- (2) That the amendments to the Local Procedures protocol, attached to the report as Appendix 2 be approved, subject to the Head of Legal Services reporting to the next meeting on a reduced timeframe overall.

6. MONITORING OFFICER PROFILE (see report of the Head of Legal Services)

- 6.1 The Head of Legal Services explained that this was an initial step towards raising the profile of the Monitoring Officer and as set out in the Committee's Work Programme a further report is due to the July meeting on a detailed communications strategy. It was noted that a Plain English guide would also be prepared.

Resolved:

1. That the revised protocol set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved.
2. That the actions aimed at raising the profile of the Monitoring Officer as set out in Section 5 of the report be approved.

7. POLITICALLY RESTRICTED POSTS: AMENDMENT TO POLITICALLY RESTRICTED POSTS, APPLICATIONS TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE FOR EXEMPTION (see report of the Director of Human Resources)

Resolved:

That the amended Procedure "Politically Restricted Posts, Applications to the Standards Committee for exemption" attached as Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

8. UPDATE ON DECISIONS OF SUB-COMMITTEES (see report of the Head of Legal Services)

Resolved: That the report be noted.

9. STANDARDS COMMITTEE: WORK PROGRAMME (see report of the Head of Legal Services)

Resolved: That the Work Programme be endorsed.

10. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 7.18pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATE