



City of Westminster Standards Committee

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Classification: General Release
Title: Job Descriptions for Members
Report of: Head of Members Services
Wards Involved: All
Policy Context: High Ethical Standards
Financial Summary: There are no financial implications arising
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1. Executive Summary

This report addresses the suggestion made by the London Councils Remuneration Panel of creating job descriptions for Members, including the possibility that, in cases where a Councillor is substantially failing in their duties, their Basic Allowance be withdrawn. The General Purposes Committee asked that this matter be considered by the Standards Committee.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee note the content of the report;
- 2.2 That the Committee comment upon the principle of job descriptions for Members; and
- 2.3 That the Committee offer their views on the proposals set out in section 5 of the report (Significantly Underperforming Members).

3. Background

- 3.1 At its meeting on 10th February 2010 the General Purposes Committee considered the Members' Allowances Scheme 2010/11 report. This had regard to the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel which recommended that, in individual circumstances where Councillors are not fulfilling their duties, the Standards Committee be empowered to recommend that the basic allowance be not paid. The General Purposes Committee asked that a report on how this would operate be submitted to the Standards Committee at a future meeting.
- 3.2 It is recognised that a Member could not be penalised for not fulfilling their Councillor duties unless those duties are clearly set out and each Member is made aware of them. In response to the latter consideration, the idea of producing job descriptions for Members was put forward and that they would also assist members of the public in understanding the various roles undertaken by Councillors.

4. The Purpose of Job Descriptions for Members

- 4.1 Job descriptions for Members would have four main purposes:
- (1) to provide clarity for Councillors, officers and the public about what is expected of Members in their role as a Ward Councillor and other key roles within the Council structure, such as the Leader and Cabinet Members;
 - (2) to support Councillors by providing a checklist to identify their development needs in the roles they are currently undertaking; and
 - (3) to have a point of reference to identify Councillors who are substantially failing in their duties as Members and hold them to account.
- (4) to assist the public in understanding the role of Councillors.
- 4.2 **A common understanding** - with regard to point (1) above, Member job descriptions would, importantly, help the public understand the roles and responsibilities that Councillors carry out on behalf of the residents they are elected to serve. It is intended that these would be publicised on the Council's website. Having a description of these responsibilities set out in an accessible way would encourage a common expectation of Members amongst officers and residents. Members of the public are likely to have an idea about what Ward Councillors generally do, but may not have a complete understanding of what a Councillor's duties and functions are within the Council as well as the community. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that many people (whether a member of the public or a Council officer) would not be fully aware of the functions carried out by Members with special roles such as the Leader, Cabinet Members etc.

- 4.3 **Support and development** - with regard to point (2) above, it is necessary for all Councillors to have an awareness of what their role as a Ward Member entails and what responsibilities they have in any additional role they are given within the Council. Members have a responsibility to the Council to fulfil their duties, but the Council also has responsibility to support its Members and provide them with the knowledge, skills and training they require. A job description may help Councillors identify the latter and communicate this to the Council.

It also may be useful for Members to understand the special roles of their colleagues for the purposes of future development and succession planning.

- 4.4 **Accountability** – with regard to point (3) above, the situation may occur where a Councillor substantially fails to fulfil their duties. A Member may not have conducted themselves inappropriately or behaved in a manner that breaches the Members' Code of Conduct in any overt way. However, a Councillor, chosen by the electorate to represent them as their Ward Member, may simply not be fulfilling that role sufficiently. In this circumstance, it is reasonable that the Member in question be held to account. A job description would not only make Members aware of what is expected of them (as explained in paragraph 4.2 above), but can be used as a point of reference to determine whether a Member is significantly underperforming.

5. **Significantly Underperforming Members**

- 5.1 In accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, Members are required to attend a qualifying duty (a qualifying duty is attendance at a meeting discharging a function of the authority) at least once every six months as a minimum requirement and, if it appears that a Member is in danger of missing this requirement, Legal and Democratic Services will contact the Member (in consultation with the Chief Whip) to make them aware. If it is brought to the Council's attention that a Member is significantly underperforming and generally failing to fulfil their duties as a Westminster Councillor, this could be addressed in the same way – with a written warning.
- 5.2 Once passed, the Localism Act is expected to enable councils to censure but will not be able to suspend or disqualify members from Council membership. Membership of the Council will only be terminated voluntarily, upon losing a seat at a local election or if a Member is convicted of criminal offence. Accordingly, the City Council has the right to impose sanctions on Members if warranted but cannot disqualify a Member by choice. As stated Members are currently initially informed of their risk of insufficient attendance in writing, in consultation with the respective Chief Whip. However, if a Member continues to persistently underperform some form of sanction could be imposed, if allowed in new statutory provisions.
- 5.3 The report of the London Councils' Independent Remuneration Panel accepted that withdrawing a Member's Basic Allowance would be difficult without the necessary legislative framework to implement. Currently, if Councils have an allowances scheme the same level of basic allowance must

be payable to all members. In respect of Special Responsibility allowances these apply to positions which are either elected to by the Council or relevant Committee or in the case of Cabinet Members appointed by the Leader. In the event of poor performance those responsible for such appointments will take action to remedy the situation. Accordingly it is not considered possible or necessary at present to institute any system to withdraw allowances in full or in part as a result of the performance of elected members.

6. Job Descriptions

6.1 Example job descriptions have been drafted for the following roles, attached:

- Ward Member (Appendix A)
- Leader of the Council (Appendix B)
- Cabinet Member (Appendix C)

7. Conclusion

7.1 As explained above in section 4, providing a set of job descriptions for Members of the City Council may have its advantages and is primarily intended to be a beneficial tool for Members, Officers and the public. It is important to clarify that, if the proposals were to be adopted, job descriptions for Members would not be produced with a view to disciplining or reprimanding Councillors and allowances (basic or special responsibility) could not be withdrawn. With these considerations in mind, the Committee is invited to comment upon the proposals.

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, Please Contact Giles Roca
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Background Papers - None

CITY OF WESTMINSTER

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

WARD MEMBER

Purpose:

1. To participate in the good governance of the City of Westminster.
2. To represent effectively the interests of their ward and its constituents, serving all fairly and equally.
3. To actively contribute to the formation and scrutiny of the authority's policies, budget, strategies and service delivery.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. To fulfil the statutory and locally determined requirements of an elected Member of a local authority and the authority itself, including compliance with all relevant codes of conduct, and participation in those decisions and activities reserved to the Full Council and to attend all meetings of Full Council.
2. To participate effectively as a Member of any committee or panel to which the Members is appointed, including related responsibilities for the services falling with the committee's/panel's terms of reference.
3. To regularly attend and participate at Community Forum meetings and events.
4. To attend and participate in all Influential Councillor consultation meetings.
5. To work with the relevant Lead Member and colleagues to (a) consult with the community and (b) participate in the area and service based consultative processes and resolve local issues where appropriate.
6. To effectively represent the interests of their ward and their constituents through a thorough knowledge of the locality.
7. To actively participate in case work or member surgeries to address constituents' problems effectively.
8. To represent the authority to the community, and the community to the authority through the various forums available.
9. To participate in the activities of an outside body, to which the Councillor is appointed, proving two-way communication between the organisations. Also to develop and maintain a working knowledge of the authority's policies and

practices in relation to that body and of the community's needs and aspirations in respect of that body's role and functions.

10. To participate in the scrutiny or performance review of the services of the authority including, the scrutiny of policies and budget, and their effectiveness to achieving the strategic objectives of the authority.
11. To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the authority's services, management arrangements, powers/duties, constraints, and to develop good working relations with relevant officers of the authority.
12. To participate in any member development activities organised by the authority to improve your activities as an effective Councillor.

Skills Required:

1. The ability to lead and champion the interests of the local community.
2. The ability to chair meetings in the community and facilitate discussions.
3. The ability to develop relationships with key Council officers and representatives from partner agencies and the ability to build effective relationships with all sections of the community (in order to be able to represent their needs to the council).
4. Community engagement skills.
5. Managing conflict and mediation skills.
6. The ability to work with the media and to identify when additional support from public relations specialists is required, to ensure the council is positively represented.
7. The ability to communicate with a range of audiences, including partners.
8. Active listening and questioning skills.
9. The ability to make an effective presentation and public speaking skills.
10. The ability to use IT to access agendas, minutes, reports, etc and to use the Council's e-mail system.

Knowledge:

1. An understanding of national policies and their impact on the ward.
2. Knowledge of the issues within the ward and the wider locality.
3. An understanding of how the City Council works.

4. Knowledge of the City Council structure, key contact officers and services procedures and eligibility criteria (in relation to schemes and services administered by the Council).
5. Knowledge of the political decision-making structures of the Council and partners.
6. An understanding of the Code of Conduct for Members, including ethics and standards.
7. An understanding of legislation and Council policies to which Councillors must adhere.
8. Knowledge of the Council's standards of customer care and complaints procedure.
9. Knowledge of partner agencies in the context of the ward.

CITY OF WESTMINSTER
JOB DESCRIPTIONS
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Purpose:

1. To provide effective political leadership and the strategic direction for the Council.
2. To chair the Cabinet and ensure that it achieves its terms of reference.
3. To ensure that the Council delivers high quality, value for money services.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. To provide the political leadership to the Council, including proposing the policy framework within which the Council will operate and to take such executive action as may be delegated by the authority.
2. To lead the Cabinet and be responsible for the Council's corporate and resource strategy.
3. To ensure that the Cabinet achieves its terms of reference both collectively and as individual portfolio holders.
4. To ensure the effective integration of roles, responsibilities and functions within the Cabinet membership.
5. As Leader of the Council, to be the key contact for outside organisations (including Central Government, Local Authority Associations and Council partners) and the Council's Senior Leadership Team.
6. To be the representative voice of the Council, for example, in its dealings with Central Government, other Local Authorities and their Associations.
7. To act as the political spokesperson for the authority.

Skills Required:

1. Advanced leadership skills.
2. Ability to develop a vision for the City of Westminster and drive the Council and its partners towards achieving that vision.

3. The ability to be an ambassador for the City Council - to be able to represent the Council both within and outside the Council, particularly at the sub-regional, regional and national level.
4. Ability to lead the Council towards continuous improvement.
5. Ability to provide political leadership for their Group.
6. Advanced chairing skills
7. Ability to plan and prioritise the business of Council, Cabinet and its committees (having regard to the terms of reference and the key challenges facing the Council).
8. Ability to facilitate effective communication within and across the Council and to ensure the community are able to engage in the Council's decision making processes.
9. Advanced skills in working with the media and an ability to identify when additional support from public relations specialists is required, to ensure the Council is positively represented.
10. Advanced public speaking skills.
11. Tact and diplomacy to be able to work across the full range of Council services, partners and political groups.
12. Ability to build effective relationships with other parts of the political management structure e.g. Full Council, Policy and Scrutiny Committees, Committees and other political Groups.

Knowledge:

1. A detailed understanding of the strategic role of the Leader of the Council.
2. Detailed understanding of the legally defined role of the Chief Executive and other senior officers.
3. Detailed understanding of the national policy framework and its impact on local policy development.
4. Detailed knowledge of the role of local partners and the services they deliver.
5. Detailed understanding of the Council's constitution, Code of Conduct, budget and audit processes and key internal policies.
6. Understanding of the relationship between national politics and local political leadership.

7. Understanding of the wider, national issues facing Councillors and the practical implications for Westminster Councillors.
8. An understanding of project management principles.

NOTE: The above duties and responsibilities are in addition to the Member's role as a Ward Councillor (see separate job description).

CITY OF WESTMINSTER

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

CABINET MEMBER

Purpose:

1. To have the strategic responsibility for, and provide a lead on, a named portfolio of services.
2. To have the responsibility for, and provide a lead on, the initiation of policy in respect of the relevant portfolio.
3. To decide the executive action to be taken in implementing those matters of council policy allocated to them within their portfolio, seeking advice from the Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Service, where appropriate.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. To be a member of, and attend, Cabinet meetings and to share the collective responsibility for decisions taken by Cabinet.
2. To contribute to the development of strategic policy as part of the Cabinet collective.
3. To take personal responsibility, and to be held accountable, for any decisions taken, and to share with the appropriate service managers responsibility for the performance of services within their portfolio.
4. To respond to or deal with any issues arising at Council meetings relating to their portfolio, to include reporting on progress made against portfolio priorities.
5. To act as spokesperson or advocate within and outside the authority on those services and functions within their portfolio.
6. To provide regular reports on progress and to undertake consultation on decisions as required.
7. To attend the appropriate Policy and Scrutiny Committee meetings to share priorities, discuss decisions taken and/or support the policy formulation process.
8. To consult Ward Councillors and other stakeholders as part of the development and review of policy.
9. As part of the Cabinet, to be involved in:

- leading the community planning process for the Council;
- the consultation on, and drawing up of, the revenue and capital budgets, and monitoring budget under/over spends;
- leading the search for continuous improvement;
- taking decisions on resources and priorities to deliver the strategies and budget approved by Full Council;
- promoting and participating in Councillor Development, to be responsible for personal development and undergo appropriate development and continuous improvement for any role undertaken.

Skills Required:

1. Advanced leadership skills for areas of individual responsibility and, the ability to work with the Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader as an executive team.
2. High level decision-making.
3. Ability to assimilate, analyse and deal with complex strategic issues and information.
4. Intermediate chairing skills to be able to chair meetings relating to their portfolio and local public service boards.
5. Relationship building – with other Cabinet colleagues, Executive Management Group/senior officers, Overview and Scrutiny, Partners etc
6. Ability to work as part of an executive team to drive forward the continuous improvement of the council.
7. Advanced communication skills to be able to work constructively with officers, councillors and partners.
8. Advanced presentation and advanced public speaking skills.
9. Advanced skills in working with the media and an ability to identify when additional support from public relations specialists is required, to ensure the council is positively represented.
10. Ability to manage a busy and complex workload, often to tight timescales and deadlines.

Knowledge:

1. Knowledge of the key areas relating to their Cabinet portfolio and its relationship with other portfolios within the cabinet.
2. A detailed understanding of the strategic role of Cabinet within the council.
3. Understanding of the role of a portfolio holder as part of the executive team.

4. Detailed understanding of council strategy, policies and operations.
5. Detailed knowledge of the challenges facing local government.
6. Understanding of the national policy framework and its impact on local policy development.
7. Knowledge of community needs and their priorities for action.
8. Knowledge of the role of local partners and the services they deliver.
9. Understanding of the council's constitution, Code of Conduct, budget and audit processes and key internal policies.
10. Understanding of the principles and importance of making sound, evidenced-based decisions.
11. An understanding of project management principles.

NOTE: The above duties and responsibilities are in addition to the Member's role as a Ward Councillor (see separate job description).