



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held at 6.30pm on Monday 18th June 2012, Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP

Present: Councillors Tim Mitchell (Chairman), Ian Adams, David Boothroyd, Michael Brahams, Ruth Bush and Alastair Moss.

Independent Person: Geoffrey Rivlin

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 There were no Declarations of Interest.

2. MINUTES

2.1 **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2012 be approved.

3. NEW CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS (see report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services)

3.1 Peter Large, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, introduced the report. He advised that officers had now completed the initial work on the new Members Code of Conduct due to come into force on 1 July, in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act. The awaited regulations setting out those Disclosable Pecuniary Interests had now been issued and included in the new Members Code of Conduct.

3.2 Mr Large drew particular attention to the requirements to comply with the new statutory requirements with respect to the disclosure of Pecuniary Interests which without reasonable excuse will be a criminal offence, punishable by a fine of up to £5,000 and disqualification from office for up to five years. In view of the importance of these provisions it was proposed to include these as an Appendix to the Code.

3.3 Following discussion the Committee agreed that the Code should continue to require the disclosure by Members of a wider range of interests than is provided for by the Regulations. The Code will therefore continue to require the disclosure of any interest which may be objectively considered to affect a Member's judgement in the public interest. The Committee agreed to recommend that Members with a pecuniary or prejudicial interest should be required by Standing Orders to leave the meeting, save where attendance is for the purpose of making representations, answering questions

or giving evidence relating to the matter. A report to the General Purposes Committee relating to Standing Orders will consider this aspect in due course.

- 3.4 The Committee noted that the adoption of the new Register of Interest requirements, as part of the new Code will require Members and Co-opted Members to complete new Register of Interest forms. These will be issued shortly after the formal adoption of the Code and, once returned, placed on the Council's website as a requirement of the Localism Act. In giving consideration to the registration requirements the Committee agreed that the requirement to record the receipt of Gifts and Hospitality should be retained and at the current level of £25 or more.
- 3.5 The Regulations relating to Pecuniary Interests have been published by the DCLG at a very late stage in the context of the 1st July commencement date. This forced the final drafting and approval of the Code, to be quicker than is ideal. Accordingly, the code and the associated wider arrangements will be fully reviewed following 6 months operation.
- 3.6 The Committee also asked that a programme of training in the provisions of the Code be arranged for Members and Co-opted Members.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Committee approve the proposed revised Members' Code of Conduct attached as Appendix 1 including the additional requirements relating to the Registration of Interests, and including the note summarising the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 in relation to disclosable Pecuniary Interests and accordingly recommend the Code of Conduct to the Council.
- (ii) That the further provisions relating to the Declaration of Interests set out in Section 3 of the report and the attached Code of Conduct be agreed.
- (iii) That the Committee agreed a Member with a Prejudicial Interest should be permitted to attend a public Council, Committee or Sub-Committee meeting in the circumstances specified paragraph 3.10 of the report and this provision should be retained and incorporated in the new Code of Conduct but otherwise be required to leave the meeting room.

4. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON (see report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services)

- 4.1 The Committee agreed that the Independent Person be invited to attend all meetings of the Committee.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

5. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 7.20pm.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____