



City of Westminster

Committee Agenda

Title: **Standards Committee**

Meeting Date: **Thursday 9th July, 2015**

Time: **7.00 pm**

Venue: **Rooms 3 & 4 - 17th Floor, City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP**

Members: **Councillors:**
Judith Warner (Chairman)
Ian Adams
David Boothroyd
Ruth Bush
Brian Connell
Louise Hyams

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussion Part 1 of the Agenda

Admission to the public gallery is by ticket, issued from the ground floor reception at City Hall from 6.00pm. If you have a disability and require any special assistance please contact the Committee Officer (details listed below) in advance of the meeting.



An Induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. If you require any further information, please contact the Committee Officer, Mick Steward, Head of Committee and Governance Services.

**Tel: 7641 3134; Email: msteward@westminster.gov.uk
Corporate Website: www.westminster.gov.uk**

Note for Members: Members are reminded that Officer contacts are shown at the end of each report and Members are welcome to raise questions in advance of the meeting. With regard to item 2, guidance on declarations of interests is included in the Code of Governance; if Members and Officers have any particular questions they should contact the Head of Legal & Democratic Services in advance of the meeting please.

AGENDA

PART 1 (IN PUBLIC)

1. MEMBERSHIP

The Head of Committee and Governance Services to report any changes to the membership.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations by Members and Officers of the existence and nature of any personal or prejudicial interests in matters on this agenda.

3. MINUTES

To sign the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2015.

(Pages 1 - 2)

4. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT: PROGRESS REPORT AND REVIEW

Report of the Head of Cabinet and Member Secretariat.

(Pages 3 - 10)

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

To receive any other business which the Chairman considers urgent.

Tasnim Shawkat
Tri-borough Director of Law
3 July 2015



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Standards Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **Thursday 26th March, 2015**, Rooms 3 & 4 - 17th Floor, City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP

Members Present: Councillors Judith Warner (Chairman), Ian Adams, David Boothroyd, Ruth Bush, Louise Hyams and Tim Mitchell

Also Present: His Honour Geoffrey Rivlin QC (statutory Independent Person)

Apologies for Absence: None

1 MEMBERSHIP

There were no changes.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3 MINUTES

3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2014 be approved as a correct record.

4 MEMBER INDUCTION PROGRAMME: UPDATE (SEE REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CABINET SECRETARIAT)

4.1 Councillor Mitchell commenced the discussion by outlining the development work undertaken by the Housing, Finance and Customer Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee. This was undertaken as part of the Committee Work Programme but it was noted that some presentations could be of wider benefit to all Members. Some Policy and Scrutiny Committees already do so and this was regarded as good practice.

Action: That as part of a wider Member Development programme Policy and Scrutiny Committees, via the Westminster Scrutiny Commission, be encouraged to offer the opportunity to attend appropriate information gathering sessions to all Members.

4.2 The Committee supported the importance of continuing to develop/train Members and the need to develop a programme. The following suggestions for consideration were made:

- Specific training for Policy and Scrutiny Committee Members in their role.
- Briefing sessions on major forthcoming changes.
- Bus tour of the City.
- Contractor Services
- Finance – How Local Government Finance Works
- Casework
- Key Service area presentations.

4.3 Members also asked that consideration be given to the simplifying of the Members Code or at least adding the principles to the Council diary. Also Members stressed the need for a hard copy of the Key Officer directory to be made available.

Action

1. That the Members Code be simplified, if possible, and a report be presented to the Standards Committee (**Action:** By Monitoring Officer).
2. That a summary of the simplified code be produced in pocket format and/or included in the front of the Council Diary.
3. That a hard copy of a Directory or Key Officers be produced (**Action:** Members Services).

4.4 It was noted that Member input into any emerging Member Development programme was of vital importance. In particular, the views of Backbench Councillors was regarded to be of particular significance. Accordingly, a workshop, for all Members, with a social element, during June should be arranged to develop the programme.

Action: That Officers, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Ian Adams, on behalf of the WSC, identify a date/time for the workshop and prepare a programme for the event.

4.5 Geoffrey Rivlin (Independent Person) endorsed the suggestions and welcomed the proposal to develop a properly formulated rolling training and development plan for Members on an ongoing basis. He expressed concern that one Member still remained to be trained on the Members Code of Conduct.

5 CLOSE OF MEETING

The Meeting ended at 7.59 pm

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____



City of Westminster

Standards Committee

Date: 9 July 2015

Classification: For General Release

Title: Member Development: Reception and Review

Report of: Head of Cabinet Secretariat

Wards Involved: Not Applicable

Policy Context: Not Applicable

Financial Summary: Not Applicable

Report Author: Doug Precey
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the reception for Members and frontline officers that took place on 16th June and feedback from Members on the support that they receive and future thoughts.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Standards Committee notes and provides feedback on how they feel Member Development might progress in the future.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the last Standards Committee meeting on 25th March, Members reviewed what workshops and information sessions had been provided since the election in May 2014.
- 3.2 This report focuses on the reception held for Members and officers on 16th June and the feedback received from Members regarding the level of support that they receive across the Council and what they might like to see in the future in regards to any Member Development programme.

4. Reception for Members and frontline officers

- 4.1 The reception was held on the evening of Tuesday 16th June 2015 and all backbench Members, plus the Chief Whip of the Majority Party and the Leader of the Council were invited.
- 4.2 The purpose of the reception was to introduce Members to officers who they might interact with on a day-to-day basis, so it was decided that frontline officers should be invited rather than members of the Executive Management Team (EMT) or more senior officers.
- 4.3 In total, fourteen Members and twenty four officers attended (a full list of attendees is attached as Appendix A). The cost of the event was £200 including food and drink. The Lord Mayor kindly donated the use of her rooms for the occasion.

5. Members feedback on support provided

- 5.1 From the few responses received it would seem Members are happy with the support provided by the Member Services team, although the question was aimed at addressing the support provided by all officers and not just this specific team.
- 5.2 Comments were received about the Policy & Scrutiny function in terms of the length of reports and the examination of Cabinet Members at the meetings, as well as a modest amount of support for future workshops on various issues.
- 5.3 There was mention of a contact list of officers. A list of contacts for all the officers who attended the reception was sent to all Members who attended the session and a full Council directory is being compiled. This will take a little time as not all posts have been filled following the Council's restructure.
- 5.4 A full list of responses is provided at Appendix B.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The cost of the reception was £200. This was funded from the Member Services budget. If future events are held, consideration should be given to whether the Member Development budget would be more appropriate. At present, this budget is used solely for the cost of conferences or training courses attended by Members.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

**If you have any queries about this report
please contact: Doug Precey, Head of Cabinet Secretariat
Tel: 020 7641 5614
Email: dprecey@westminster.gov.uk**

Appendix A: Member and frontline officer reception, 16th June: Attendance

Cllrs

Cllr Cox	Cllr Cuthbertson
Cllr Rigby	Cllr Devenish
Cllr Arzymanow	Cllr Adams
Cllr Smith	Cllr Warner
Cllr Wilkinson	Cllr Bush
Cllr Hyams	Cllr Angela Harvey
Cllr Mitchell	Cllr Bott

Officers

Growth, Planning and Housing

Mike Chatten - North Area Team Leader, Planning
Roald Piper – Team Leader, Planning Enforcement Team
Julia Asghar – Area Planning Officer, South Team
Helena Stephenson – Senior Housing Needs Manager
Candida Thompson – Head of Service, Housing Options Service

City Management and Communities

Claire Hardy – Neighbourhood Problem Solving Coordinator (Bryanston & Dorset Sq, Hyde Park, Little Venice and Church Street)
Richard Barker – Director of Community Services
Stuart Love – Strategic Director City Management
Dave Nevitt – Environmental Health
Paul Renvoize - Lead Road Management Inspector (Streetworks)
Ed Man - Lead Road Management Inspector (Highways)
Lina Pattni - Permit Officer Highways
Anthony DeRoche - Highways Licensing Lead Inspector
Barbara Milne – Senior Arboricultural Officer
Glyn Franks - Senior Licensing Inspector
Maria Johnson - City Inspector – Noise and Licensing Enforcement

Corporate Services

Mandy Gado – Head of Procurement Operations
Anthony Oliver – Chief Procurement Officer
Andrew Curtois – Head of Category Management Corporate and City Services (Procurement)
Andrew Shorter – Head of Category Management - Housing & Construction (Procurement)

Children's Services

Natasha Bishopp – Head of Family Recovery
Jayne Vertkin – Head of Early Intervention and Localities
Richard Stanley – Tri-borough Assistant Director for School Standards
Betty McDonald - Head of Tri-borough Youth Offending Service

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Appendix B: Feedback from Members on support received from the Council

All backbench Members, after the reception, were asked the following three questions. Their full responses are listed below.

- Since last year what has worked well in terms of the support provided to you from across the Council?
 - What could be improved to help you work better in your ward?
 - Are there any workshops that you would like to see run for Members?
-

I have found the support from Members Service to be of a high quality. Because of the high casework load, I have discussed with my Member Services Officer how he may provide an active support with casework.

I am still unhappy about the role of P&S Committees in Westminster. Too often they allow Cabinet Members an uncritical role in their examination of policy. P&S Committees is where Cabinet Members should be accountable for their policies and actions. I think a workshop on this would be helpful, preferably run by someone who shares the view that P&S should be a critical friend.

1. On the whole I am happy with the support from members' services. My Member Services Officer has been working very well.
 2. I think a monthly email reminding us of remaining ward budget available would be useful.
 3. A workshop updating us on the likely impact of DCLG funding settlements before the seminar usually held in January would be useful.
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1. Ten out of ten when my specific Member Services Officer is at work re Members support (a little more hit and miss with some others of the team)
 2. No need to improve - but if relevant wanted to say P and S and all Committee Reports are getting worse. Executive page A4 summaries rather than long winded documents which lose their train of thought too prevalent.
 3. Ask new members. But some kind of team working with a charity theme to get officers/members mixing always good.
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I think an address book with phone numbers and emails of all the relevant officers would be very helpful - so I know who to contact.

I think the drinks reception worked well, informal yet very informative.

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1. Having a very competent support officer and City Inspector
 2. Contact details of which officers do what
 3. Planning workshop might be helpful
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I am very happy with the level of support I receive - particularly from my Ward Officer, who is excellent.

Rather than workshops, I wonder whether we have ever considered 'Introduction To...' or 'How To...' guides (particularly for new members). I know that Councillor Begum has suggested this, too.

1. Our Member Services Officer and the service she has provided, first class, would be at loss without her support!
 2. A list of the key support Officers and contact details who are available to ward Councillor bespoke to each ward i.e. City Inspector, Arboricultural Officer, Street Management, Enforcement Officer, Highways Officer, CWH key contact for the ward based on CWH office handling the ward, Planning Officer etc.
 3. Planning & licensing
-

I think the drafting of letters has worked well, the weekly updates also worked well in making sure we were kept up to date on issues such as ward funding applications. These could be more individual in terms of listing what's been asked for and where we are with it ie still waiting to hear or completed tasks per Councillor.

I think what could be improved is a better directory of each department, what they do and who the main contacts are for each area as well as services they can provide for members. It would also be helpful to have a list of expected response times.

In terms of workshops I would like one on housing benefit and another on housing bidding/allocations.

I am very happy with the service I receive from my ward officer and all other officers that provide a service in my ward particularly.

1. I have had no negative experiences with WCC officers over the last year - in fact I have had very good support from all I deal with.

2. Other Council colleagues... have often said that we need an up-to-date (probably online) internal phone directory and set of WCC organisational charts: it's sometimes difficult to know whom to contact about an unfamiliar problem, and even if one gets a name, phone numbers are quite closely guarded in some cases.
3. We need a proper remote access e-mail system with much greater storage capacity (and/or perhaps a WCC cloud to help with archiving older messages).

In challenging street management roles in the West End and St James's, we need stability in our teams of Wardens and other street mgmt officers: on a couple of occasions over the past few years, highly effective front-line officers have been moved to other wards without warning (and apparently to those officers' surprise). Clearly there will always be some turnover and rotation of staff, but rotations out of the stress areas should be very carefully considered if the officer him/herself is not asking to move.

Workshops

As to workshops, I have never properly understood our housing allocation policies or worked out how to fast-track an urgent housing repair. A practical workshop (with appropriate hand-outs) on how to advise those seeking WCC housing and on how to help existing tenants with housing-related problems would be very helpful.

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1. The availability of Officers to answer simple questions about procedures or requests from constituents is very important. In general the system works particularly when the high workload of Officers is taken into account. Short briefing documents outlining the Council's position on topical issues are also helpful.
 2. Clearer indication of what is confidential and what isn't. At present Councillors including me generally play it safe and so do not always make the best case to their constituents.
 3. The induction courses organised by the Council about a year ago were essential and should certainly be repeated for new Councillors. Workshops would also be helpful that inform members about the Council's legal powers and obligations in key areas of activity e.g. planning, licensing, healthcare and education.
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