



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Standards Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **Thursday 14th November, 2019**, Room 18.01, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Judith Warner (Chairman), David Boothroyd, David Harvey, Louise Hyams and Patricia McAllister

Also Present: Asif Iqbal, MBE, Elizabeth Walters, Shajad Hussain (Independent Persons), Hazel Best (Principal Solicitor), Joyce Golder (Principal Solicitor) and Reuben Segal (Head of Committee and Governance Services)

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Lindsey Hall and Tasnim Shawkat (Monitoring Officer)

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 It was noted that Councillor David Harvey had replaced Councillor Danny Chalkley.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were none.

3 MINUTES

- 3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on the 11th of July 2019 be signed by the chairman as a correct record of the proceedings.

4 UPDATE REPORT ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY MEMBERS

- 4.1 Hazel Best, Principal Solicitor, introduced the report that provided an update to the committee on the use of social media by members.
- 4.2 The Committee considered the revised guidance on the use of social media by members, which was set out in appendix B to the report, following consultation with all councillors.

4.3 Members reiterated their support for a guidance note for councillors given the immediacy of social media compared to letter writing as well as its function as a form of broadcasting. This view was supported by the Council's Independent Persons.

4.4 As part of the consultation some members had raised concerns about dealing with online abuse. Hazel Best advised members that the Local Government Association (LGA) was undertaking a review of the member model code of conduct in response to the recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, but also in response to rising local government concern about the increasing incidence of public, member to member and officer/member intimidation and abuse and overall behavioural standards and expectations in public debate and engagement. A timetable has yet to be published although a new model code was expected to be agreed at the LGA annual meeting in July 2020.

4.5 **RESOLVED:** That the revised social media guidance for members be recommended to the next council meeting for adoption.

4.6 **ACTIONS:**

1. Circulate the social media guidance to Councillors twice per year as a reminder.
2. Incorporate consideration of the LGA consultation of the member model code of conduct into the Committee's work programme.

(Action for: Reuben Segal, Committee and Governance Services)

5 UPDATE ON MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING

5.1 The committee considered a report that provided an update on the refresher member code of conduct training following the adoption of a revised code by the full council at its meeting on the 18th September.

5.2 The training incorporated themes including: the revised Code of Conduct; gifts and hospitality; cultural awareness and respect; the use of social media by councillors and General Data Protection Rules (GDPR).

5.3 Members were informed that Development Planning Services provided training to the Planning and City Development Committee on a range of planning matters in advance of each of its meetings.

5.4 **RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

6 UPDATE ON TRAINING FOR INDEPENDENT PERSONS

6.1 Joyce Golder, Principal Solicitor, introduced the report on the training provided to the council's Independent Persons regarding their role. This was attended by all three of the council's IPs who had asked questions on a range

of issues including the process for accessing encrypted emails from the Monitoring Officer on sensitive matters.

6.2 The council's IPs welcomed the training session and the ability to contact officers for guidance and advice. Members and the IPs noted that training was evolving. The chairman suggested that to assist them the IPs review the ethical standards issues and cases at other councils. Some of the IPs advised that they had looked at the websites of other councils but had not had the opportunity to speak to IPs from other authorities. Hazel Best advised that annual conferences are held for monitoring officers which include lessons from other authorities. Joyce Golder informed members that the Bi-Borough Legal Services Team is part of an alliance with legal teams in nine other local authorities where best practice across different areas including investigations in relation to breaches of ethical standards is shared.

6.3 **RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

7 WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER

7.1 The chairman invited members of the committee and the council's independent persons to submit any suggestions for inclusion in the committee's work programme.

7.2 With regards to member development, the chairman invited officers to suggest new areas of training for members where it is considered additional insight for professional practice is required.

7.3 **RESOLVED:** That the agenda items for the next meeting, set out in the work programme attached as appendix 2 to the report, be agreed.

The Meeting ended at 8.01 pm

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____