



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

# MINUTES

## General Purposes Committee

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held on **Wednesday 11th September, 2019**, Room 18.8, Westminster City Hall, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

**Members Present:** Councillors Paul Swaddle (Chairman), Robert Rigby and David Boothroyd

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Tim Mitchell

#### 1 MEMBERSHIP

1.1 It was noted there were no changes to the membership.

#### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no Declarations of Interest.

#### 3 MINUTES

3.1 **RESOLVED:** The Chairman, with the consent of the Committee, signed the minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2019 as a correct record of proceedings.

#### 4 PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY FOR COUNCILLORS AND AMENDMENT OF 2019-2020 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME

4.1 Lee Witham, Director of People Services, introduced the report that set out proposals for a Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave policy for Members as well as the provision for Councillors to claim reimbursement of care expenses they incur in arranging carers to look after dependants when they are undertaking approved Council duties.

4.2 Reuben Segal, Head of Committee and Governance Services, set out the required amendments to the Members' Allowances Scheme to facilitate the payments to Councillors proposed in the policy.

- 4.3 Members welcomed the proposed policy which would help reduce the barrier to new parents becoming and remaining Councillors. They also welcomed the ability for Councillors to claim an allowance for care of dependants when undertaking their Council duties noting that Westminster was one of only two inner London boroughs not to pay such expenses.
- 4.4 Councillors queried whether the reference to the Carer's allowance being subject to tax and NI deductions in Appendix B was correct. This was confirmed to be correct.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Council be recommended to approve:

1. The adoption of a Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave Policy for Councillors attached as **Appendix A** to the report.
2. The ability for Councillors to claim reimbursement of care expenses when they attend approved duties and incur costs for the provision of care for children or adult dependants.
3. The amendments to the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2019-2020 attached as **Appendix B** to the report which incorporate the above mentioned provisions.

**5 CHANGE TO PROGRAMME OF COUNCIL MEETINGS 2019-2020**

- 5.1 The Head of Committee and Governance Services presented the item and highlighted the reasons for varying the business at the Council meetings on 13<sup>th</sup> November and 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 as set out in the report.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Council be recommended to:

1. Change the Council meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> November from an Extraordinary meeting to an Ordinary meeting.
2. Change the Council meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> March from an Ordinary meeting to an Extraordinary meeting in order to receive a report including recommendations in respect of the reception of a speech by the Leader of the Council on council priorities and financial aims and estimates of income and expenditure for 2020 - 2021 as set out in Council Procedure Rules, Section 9.4 (1)(c) and 9.21 (1-3).

**6 AMENDMENT TO THE MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT**

- 6.1 Tasnim Shawkat, Director of Law, introduced a report on revising the Members' Code of Conduct following a recommendation by the Standards Committee.
- 6.2 The Standards Committee had, following a review of the Local Government Ethical Standards by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL), approved amendments to the Code of Conduct for adoption by the full Council on matters including bullying and harassment and the role of ward councillors and Planning Committee Members in relation to planning matters (particularly in relation to the acceptance of gifts and hospitality).
- 6.3 The Director of Law explained that the Members' Code of Conduct is an evolving document and is updated as lessons are learned from complaints received against Councillors.
- 6.4 Members clarified when they need to declare gifts and hospitality. Tasnim Shawkat advised that declarations should be submitted within 28 days of taking either hospitality or gift.
- 6.5 The Chairman advised that further work is being undertaken on the detail of information that will be required to be provided by Members when submitting declarations of gifts and hospitality they have received.
- 6.6 With reference to the inclusion of a definition of bullying and harassment, Members commented that this can be subjective. The Director of Law advised that the more serious the allegation the greater level of evidence is required as part of the investigation.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Council be recommended to approve the adoption of the revised Members' Code of Conduct (**Appendix 1**) to the report with effect from 19 September 2019 and to amend the Constitution accordingly.

The Meeting ended at 6.28 pm

**CHAIRMAN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

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