



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Standards Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **Thursday 20th April, 2023**, Room 18.12, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Patricia McAllister (Chair), Ruth Bush, Sara Hassan and Tim Mitchell

Also Present: Asif Iqbal (Independent Person)

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 It was noted that Councillor Bush was substituting for Councillor Chowdhury.
- 1.2 It was noted that Councillor Hyams had joined the meeting remotely and would participate in the discussions on the agenda items, however it was confirmed that she would not be able to vote on any of the items.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

- 3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2022 be signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

4 FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS FROM THE LEADERS Q&A SESSION

- 4.1 The Committee received a report which provided a follow-up on the key actions which emerged from the Question-and-Answer Session on ethical standards held with the Leader of the Council at the previous meeting of the Committee
- 4.2 The Committee discussed the harassment and intimidation of Councillors and expressed concern that Councillors were facing increasing levels of abuse

and intimidation. It was recognised that rights to object and constructive challenge were both key components of democracy, but abuse and intimidation of Councillors was unacceptable. Members considered what reporting processes were currently in place at the Council for Councillors if they did experience any intimidatory behaviour from a member of the public and what steps would be taken.

- 4.3 Following a detailed discussion Members agreed that following a review of best practice at other local authorities' explicit reference should be made in the Members Code of Conduct to state that Councillors should expect respectful behaviour from the public and that if they did have any concerns these should be reported. The Committee requested that at its next meeting a Westminster specific document be circulated providing practical advice for Councillors on what steps they can take if experiencing any threatening/intimidatory behaviour.

RESOLVED:

That the Members Code of Conduct be amended to state that Councillors should expect respectful behaviour from the public and that if they have any concerns these should be reported to the Monitoring Officer.

5 WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

- 5.1 The Committee noted the 2023-24 Work Programme and was asked to consider any items they would like to come to future meetings. Following earlier discussions Members requested a practical guide on how to deal with abusive behaviour from members of the public be brought to a future meeting. It was also noted that the Standards Committee Biennial Report would come to the meeting scheduled for 22 February 2024.
- 5.2 The Committee discussed future Member training and requested that a session on diversity be included in the training programme. A concern was also noted that two separate training sessions were being held on the Code of Conduct and Member/Officer Protocol and considered whether it would be more practicable for Members to have them held jointly.
- 5.3 The Committee also offered its congratulations to Asif Iqbal MBE on his appointment to the British Sign Language Advisory Board.

The Meeting ended at 7.36pm.

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____