



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Standards Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **Wednesday 29th November 2023**, Room 18.01, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Ruth Bush (Chair), Md Shamsed Chowdhury, Sara Hassan, Louise Hyams and Tim Mitchell

Also Present:

Councillor Adam Hug (Leader of the Council)
Asif Iqbal (Independent Person)

1 MEMBERSHIP

1.1 There were no changes to the membership.

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 13 July 2023 be signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

3.2 The Committee was informed that following the recent Member drop-in session held on Personal Safety, a further session would be scheduled for next year. Members were also pleased to learn that the Chief Executive and Director of Law and Governance would be holding a briefing with the Executive Leadership Team to discuss the Member/Officer Protocol.

4 ANNUAL Q&A WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON ETHICAL STANDARDS

4.1 As part of its efforts to raise the profile of standards the Committee had agreed to invite the Leader of the Council to attend one of its meetings each year to answer questions on ethical standards.

4.2 The Chair welcomed Councillor Adam Hug, Leader of the Council, to the meeting. Committee members were invited to submit questions to Councillor Hug on a range of ethical standards matters and the following areas were covered:

- Conduct at Council Meetings - The Committee discussed with the Leader conduct at Council meetings. Whilst it was recognised that it was important for robust debate to take part at these meetings it was essential these debates remained respectful, constructive, and accessible to residents. Concerns had been raised in the past and a best practice comparison was undertaken with the code of conducts and standing orders at comparable local authorities. Following this research Westminster's code of conduct was found to be appropriate and clear about the standards of behaviour expected from Councillors at meetings of the Council. The Committee commented that at the next meeting of the Standards Committee it would receive its Biennial Report and requested that the Nolan Principles, which were the basis of the ethical standards expected of public office holders, be embedded within it.
- Member Personal Safety – Members were pleased to note that the Council, and in particular the Standards Committee, had ensured measures were in place to support Councillors in maintaining their personal safety and to help provide support and advice to them where necessary. The Committee discussed these measures which included:
 - i) Introducing a Westminster specific Safety Protocol for Councillors which had been circulated to all Members and was also available on the Members Hub.
 - ii) A Councillor Personal Safety training session had been held with an external trainer.
 - iii) A drop-in session for Members to discuss personal safety experiences and provide advice had been organised.
 - iv) The LGA guidance on safety for Councillors had also been circulated and in addition extracts from this guidance which provided an overview of the advice had been provided to all Members.
- Councillor Training - Extensive member code of conduct training had been undertaken and held in various formats including in-person groups, smaller hybrid group sessions and on a 1:1 basis (hybrid and in person). For regulatory committees such as Planning and Licensing, training was mandatory in order to sit on these committees, and this had been completed by all those Councillors as necessary. In order to encourage attendance training was, where possible, held in a hybrid fashion where Members could attend in person or remotely. Training was also held on an

evening in order to capture those Members who worked. Members were encouraged to forward on any ideas for future training sessions, especially on topics they thought Councillors would be interested in.

- 4.3 The Chair thanked the Leader of the Council for attending the meeting. Councillor Hug thanked the Committee for all their work which he considered to be very important.

5 ANNUAL UPDATE ON MEMBER COMPLAINTS

- 5.1 The Monitoring Officer introduced the annual report which provided details of complaints recently submitted against members of the Council. It was confirmed that three complaints had been received. The Committee was provided with an overview of the nature of the complaints, and it was confirmed that none of these had been referred to the Standards Committee for a hearing.

- 5.2 Members were pleased with the code of conduct training provided and discussed options for future training. This included continuing to ensure a record was kept of those Councillors who had attended the code of conduct training. In addition, the Committee also discussed holding a specific session on equality and diversity to include elements on antisemitism and people with additional needs.

5.3 RESOLVED:

That the outcomes of the Members complaints referred to in the report be noted.

6 WORK PROGRAMME

- 6.1 The Committee noted the 2023-24 Work Programme.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 7.1 The Committee was informed that the process of recruiting an Independent Person to the Standards Committee had commenced and a copy of the advert would be circulated to the Committee.

The Meeting ended at 7.31pm.

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____