

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Friday, 21 September 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held at Guildhall, EC2 on Friday, 21 September 2012 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Revd Dr Martin Dudley
Deputy Robin Eve
Alan Graham (External Member)
Howard Lederman (External Member)
Deputy Edward Lord
Felicity Lusk (External Member)
Julian Malins
Matthew Richardson
Alderman Fiona Woolf

In attendance:

Neil Asten (Independent Person)

Officers:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Rakesh Hira | - Committee and Member Services Officer |
| Michael Cogher | - Comptroller and City Solicitor |
| Edward Wood | - Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department |

Alderman Fiona Woolf took the Chair

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Anthony Williams, Anju Sanehi (Independent Person) and Chris Taylor (Independent Person).

2. **DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS**

There were no declarations.

3. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Chairman in accordance with Standing Order No. 29.

The Comptroller & City Solicitor clarified that under the previous Standards arrangements the Chairman was required to be an Independent/Co-opted Member however this had now changed and any Member was able to stand for Chairmanship or Deputy Chairmanship. It was noted that the Co-opted

Members and Independent Person did not have any voting rights and only Court of Common Council Members were able to exercise their vote in the event of a ballot.

The Town Clerk read out a list of Members eligible to stand as Chairman. Two Members indicated their willingness to serve and a ballot was taken.

The results were as follows:

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Matthew Richardson | 3 |
| Julian Malins | 3 |

The Chair took a decision by lot and Matthew Richardson was duly elected Chairman for the ensuing year, and took the Chair.

4. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

The Committee proceeded to elect a Deputy Chairman in accordance with Standing Order No.30.

The Town Clerk read out a list of Members eligible to stand as Deputy Chairman and Deputy Edward Lord, being the only Member indicating his willingness to serve, was duly elected Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2012 were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Dr Colin Kolbert

Members thanked Dr Colin Kolbert for his work while serving on the Committee.

6. UPDATE - INDUCTION FOR INDEPENDENT PERSONS

The Comptroller & City Solicitor provided Members with a verbal update relative to the induction arrangements for the Independent Persons. He explained that an induction session had recently taken place for the newly appointed Independent Persons and that their role would include being consulted when an investigation was required.

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7. NEW MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT AND INTEREST PROVISIONS UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT 2011

A joint report of the Town Clerk and the Comptroller & City Solicitor explained that a report was presented to the Police Committee, Standards Committee, Policy & Resources Committee and the Court of Common Council in June 2012 concerning the new standards regime under the Localism Act 2011. It was

intended to bring back another report once the regulations defining a disclosable pecuniary interest had been made. Those regulations were attached to the report (Appendix 2), together with new guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government (Appendix 3). Disclosable pecuniary interests may arise in relation to employment, sponsorship, contracts, land, licences, corporate tenancies and securities, and pertaining to a Member or their partner. Technically, Members are required to notify the monitoring officer of all current disclosable pecuniary interests within 28 days of being elected or co-opted, or re-elected or re-appointed. However, once the new standards arrangements have been approved by the Court of Common Council, the Town Clerk will be writing to all Members asking for information about their current disclosable pecuniary interests.

Members views were requested on what other interests (if any) should be notified and disclosed, and in what manner, with the most likely additional category of interest being gifts and hospitality. Members also needed to adopt a new Code of Conduct, and it was recommended that this should be in the form suggested by DCLG (Appendix 1).

Members agreed that a note produced by the Chairman of Policy & Resources, which had been tabled, be disregarded.

A detailed discussion took place on gifts and hospitality, which are not classed as disclosable pecuniary interests. Members were generally supportive of not including specific additional provisions in relation to the registration and disclosure of gifts and hospitality. In part, Members considered that this was covered by the criminal law. It was also noted that under the new regime Members had to have regard to the Nolan principles, and that there were general provisions in the proposed Code of Conduct that imposed obligations on Members in relation to gifts and hospitality. Members felt that a common sense approach should be adopted that took account of individual circumstances.

It was agreed that further guidance in relation to what level of gifts and hospitality might give rise to a concern or impression of going contrary to the Code of Conduct would be a good item of work for the Committee for the next meeting.

RESOLVED – That Members:

(i) note the statutory definition of a disclosable pecuniary interest; and

Recommend to the Court of Common Council:

(ii) that no arrangements are considered appropriate for the notification and disclosure of interests other than disclosable pecuniary interests; and

(iii) that a Code of Conduct in the form set out at Appendix 1 be adopted as the City's Code of Conduct with effect from 26 October 2012.

8. **FUTURE MEETING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Comptroller & City Solicitor provided a verbal update on the future meeting arrangements. A discussion took place on the work of the Committee and what future pieces of work should be undertaken. It was agreed that the Comptroller & City Solicitor would bring a report to the next meeting setting out a procedure for dealing with complaints of a breach of the Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED – Members agreed that:

(a) Four meetings be scheduled each year (subject to the business of the meeting a meeting may be cancelled) and;

(b) A special meeting be convened if required.

9. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

Co-opted Members

In response to a question by a Member, it was requested that the Comptroller & City Solicitor investigate if there was any scope for the Co-opted Members to have voting rights on this Committee. It was agreed that a report would be submitted to the next meeting on this issue.

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items.

Next Meeting: 23 November 2012 at 12noon.

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm

Chairman

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