

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 28TH FEBRUARY 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held at Guildhall, EC2 on TUESDAY, 28th FEBRUARY 2012 at 12 Noon.

Present

Members:

Dr Colin Kolbert (Independent)
(Chairman)
Deputy Robin Eve
Edward Lord
Matthew Richardson

Officers:

Lorraine Brook
Edward Wood

- Town Clerk's Department
- Comptroller & City Solicitor's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Alderman Alison Gowman, Alan Graham (Independent), Howard Lederman (Independent), Felicity Lusk (Independent) and Anthony Williams (Independent).

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING

There were none.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th May 2011 were approved as a correct record.

4. NEW STANDARDS REGIME UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT 2011 – UPDATE

The Comptroller and City Solicitor's representative referred to the paper before the Committee, highlighting the key features of the new standards regime including discretionary areas for local authorities and matters on which regulations were still awaited.

In respect of the future arrangements for investigation of complaints and decision-making, the Committee commented on the traditional role of the Chief Commoner and the Chairman of the Privileges Committee of Aldermen to promote good conduct amongst Common Councilmen and Aldermen respectively. It was agreed that whilst this informal role should be retained in the future and acknowledged in the new arrangements, a Standards Committee should exist to ensure that investigations and decisions were undertaken in a transparent and consistent manner. Whilst it was noted that under the new

standards arrangements an individual Member could not be delegated power to act on their own, some Members felt that the role of the Chief Commoner should be formalised in due course and his/her powers codified. It was further noted that the revised standards arrangements would include the Independent Person or Persons. The option to delegate the initial assessment of allegations, and the decision whether to investigate, to the Comptroller and City Solicitor (Monitoring Officer) or any other Officer, was not favoured by the Committee.

The Committee considered the requirements in respect of adopting and publicising a new Code of Conduct and noted that whilst the Code did not have to be in any prescribed form, it must be consistent with the seven "Nolan" principles and include appropriate provision in respect of the registration and disclosure of pecuniary and other interests. The Committee commented that whilst the existing Code was unobjectionable and had no obvious omissions, it would be beneficial to review the recommended Code of Conduct that was awaited from Local Government Association (LGA) and/or the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACSeS).

The Committee considered future gifts and hospitality requirements, should these not be prescribed. Following a brief discussion about the merits and implications of increasing the current financial limit, the majority felt that all gifts and hospitality in excess of £25.00 should continue to be declared, as per the current arrangements.

The timescales for implementation of the new standards regime were outlined to the Committee and it was noted that recruitment of at least one Independent Person would have to commence no later than early April 2012 to ensure that the City Corporation could fulfil its anticipated statutory requirements as of 1 July 2012. It was agreed that the historic arrangements for search and selection should be supplemented with additional advertising methods and thereafter progressed following consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee and the Court of Common Council.

Members acknowledged that a further detailed report regarding the Code of Conduct and local standards arrangements would be submitted to the Committee for consideration ahead of submission to the Policy and Resources and Police Committees; and thereafter the Court of Common Council. As the timescales for approval of the new local arrangements were restrictive, the Committee agreed the date of the next meeting at which the final options paper for the revised local arrangements would be submitted.

RESOLVED – That the Standards Committee:-

- (i) recommends to the Policy and Resources Committee and the Court of Common Council, the search and selection process to be followed in respect of the recruitment of at least one Independent Person to ensure that the City Corporation can fulfil its anticipated statutory requirements as of 1 July 2012;

- (ii) notes that a further detailed report regarding the Code of Conduct and local standards arrangements be submitted to the Committee for consideration ahead of submission to the Policy and Resources and Police Committees; and thereafter the Court of Common Council; and
- (ii) agrees that the next meeting of the Standards Committee take place on Wednesday, 18 April 2012 at 11am.

5. QUESTIONS

There were no questions.

6. URGENT ITEMS

There was none.

The meeting closed at 12.32pm

CHAIRMAN

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