



Report – Standards Committee

Annual Report

To be presented on Thursday, 25th June 2014

*To the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons
of the City of London in Common Council assembled.*

SUMMARY

The Standards Committee is required to monitor all complaints referred to it and to prepare an annual report on its activity for submission to the Court of Common Council. It should be noted that no allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct were made to the Committee during the course of 2014/15.

MAIN REPORT

Background

1. The purpose of this report is to brief Members on the work undertaken over the last year by the Committee.
2. In accordance with the Committee's terms of reference, the Committee is required to monitor all complaints referred to it and to submit an annual report on its activities to the Court of Common Council.

Complaints to the Standards Committee

3. During the period of this report, no allegations of breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct have been made to the Committee during the course of 2014/15.

Activities of the Committee during 2014/15

4. Below is a brief synopsis of the activities undertaken by the Committee in 2014/15.

Code of Conduct

5. The Standards Committee is required to prepare, keep under review and monitor the City of London Corporation's Members' Code of Conduct and make recommendations to the Court of Common Council in respect of the adoption or revision, as appropriate, of such Code of Conduct.
6. In July 2014 an early version of the revised Members' Code of Conduct was submitted to the Court. There was considerable debate and it was agreed that further consideration should be given to the terms of the draft Code. Consequently, all Members of the Court were invited to attend a special meeting of the Standards Committee in September and an amended version was circulated to all Members for further comment.
7. A revised version of the Code, taking these comments into account, and the introduction of a mandatory registration regime for gifts and hospitality was then submitted and approved by the Court of Common Council at their meeting on 16 October 2014, with the new requirements coming into effect as of 1 January 2015.
8. A Member Development session on the Code of Conduct and Lawful Decision Making, delivered by the Comptroller and City Solicitor, took place on 21 April 2015 and was attended by three Members of the Court. On-going training both informally and formally through the Member Development Programme will continue to be provided to Members on a regular basis.

Membership and composition of the Standards Committee

9. The Standards Committee comprises twelve Members, four of whom are Co-opted and are independent from the City Corporation. In addition, there are three Independent Persons (in accordance with the Localism Act 2011). Whilst Co-opted Members are no longer a statutory requirement and have no formal vote, following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, the City of London Corporation has agreed to the inclusion of Co-opted Members on the Committee to maximise the breadth of knowledge and experience available.
10. In September 2014, two new Co-opted Members were appointed to the Standards Committee. Collectively, the Co-opted Members have regularly attended scheduled meetings of the Committee and continue to play an important role in monitoring and reviewing the City Corporation's governance arrangements. The City Corporation's three Independent Persons have also regularly attended the Committee's meetings.

Annual Update to the Members' Declarations

11. An annual update to the Members' Declarations took place in December 2014 following the introduction of new requirements in the Members' Code of Conduct.
12. Following the Court's consent to the Code of Conduct on 16 October 2014, revised guidance was thereafter approved by the Standards Committee and the annual reminder process commenced in early December 2014. Each of the City of London Corporation's elected Members and Co-opted Members were

contacted in writing in December 2014; it was noted that as at 11 January 2015, 106 elected Members had responded to the request for updates.

13. In light of that position, at its meeting in February 2015 the Committee considered the issue of partial and non-compliance with the registration requirements and a formal communication was issued to a number of Members by the Comptroller and City Solicitor, in his capacity as the Monitoring Officer. In response, a number of further updates were made to those registers of interest where partial or non-compliance had been identified. However, the annual update process has been very slow and a number of Members did not respond to the Committee's request that up-to-date registers be maintained.
14. As at 15 May 2015, seven Members were still yet to respond to numerous reminders to update their declarations. As a result, at its May 2015 meeting, the Standards Committee further discussed the serious matter of partial or non-compliance. It was agreed that a personalised letter would now be sent, by the Chairman, to those Members who had failed to fully comply with the requirements under the new Code of Conduct requesting that their declarations be updated within the next 14 days. Failing this, those Members concerned would be invited to attend a meeting with the Chairman of the Standards Committee and the Chief Commoner to discuss the matter in greater depth.
15. Members of the Standards Committee made reference to the first successful prosecution brought under the Localism Act 2011 against a Member of Dorset County Council earlier this year in order to underline the seriousness of non-compliance.
16. In advance of the 2016 annual update process, which will take place in April 2016, the Committee will write to all Members in advance to reiterate and highlight the importance of the annual update process.
17. Members of the Court are also routinely reminded to submit updates to their register of interest and the registers are updated on-line.
18. With regard to the registration requirements for the City Corporation's Co-opted Members, this matter is currently being reviewed with a view to the introduction of a system of on-line registration of all declarations made by the City Corporation's Co-opted Members.

Gifts and Hospitality - Ceremonial Officeholders

19. At their meeting in February 2015, the Committee considered a report of the Private Secretary and Chief of Staff relative to the arrangements for ceremonial officeholders in respect of gifts and hospitality, which had been considered by the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen on 10 February 2015 following a discussion of the issue at the previous meeting of the Standards Committee.
20. With regard to the receipt of hospitality, it was agreed that the same financial thresholds for hospitality should apply to the Lord Mayor as for other Members of the Court unless diplomatic, commercial or political sensitivities were a consideration in which case such instances would be reported to the Committee

rather than via the published register. The new provisions ensure that there is greater transparency about the gifts and hospitality received by ceremonial officeholders such as the Lord Mayor and, in light of its implementation, the Committee will review the arrangements and scrutinise the register in early 2016. Similar arrangements for other ceremonial officeholders such as the Sheriffs will now be progressed in consultation with the Secondary and Under Sheriff.

Dispensations

21. In February the Committee reviewed the arrangements in respect of the granting of dispensations by the City of London Corporation to Members who wish to speak and/or vote on matters where they have a relevant interest. The Committee concluded that the arrangements, whereby a Member is required to submit a detailed written request to the Dispensations Sub (Standards) Committee setting out the reasons for the request and how long the dispensation is required for, are satisfactory and enable the Standards Committee and/or the Dispensations Sub Committee to be able to continuously review the granting of dispensations and ensure that there is a consistent approach.

Recommendation

22. We submit this report for information.

All of which we submit to the judgement of this Honourable Court.

DATED this 15th May 2015.

SIGNED on behalf of the Committee.

Charles Edward Lord OBE, JP
Chairman, Standards Committee