

Committee	Dated:
Standards Committee	13 May 2016
Subject: Draft Annual Report of the Standards Committee	Public
Report of: The Town Clerk	For Decision
Report Author: Gemma Stokley, Committee and Member Services Officer	

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 one allegation of a breach of the Code of Conduct were made to the Committee during the course of 2015/16.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:-

- (a) the contents of the annual report be noted; and,
- (b) in accordance with the Committee's terms of reference, the annual report be referred to the Court of Common Council for information.

Main Report

Background

1. The purpose of this report is to brief Members on the work undertaken over the last year by the Standards 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, one allegation of a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct has been made to the Committee and was considered by an Assessment Sub (Standards) Committee on 16th December 2015. That Committee concluded unanimously that an investigation should take place in relation to the allegations made. The Independent Person was of the same view.
4. Following a meeting on 29 January 2016, the Hearing Sub Committee were unanimously of the view that the matter should proceed to a full hearing. Again, the Independent Person was of the same view.
5. The full Hearing was held on 23 February 2016. Having carefully considered the complaint and the Monitoring Officer's report; read all of the relevant papers

and considered the oral and written evidence and representations made by the parties, the Sub-Committee found unanimously that there had been breaches of the Code of Conduct. At the Respondent's request, the Sub Committee adjourned and agreed to reconvene, on a date to be confirmed, in order to consider the imposition of sanctions.

6. On 15 March 2016, the Hearing Sub Committee met for the final time to consider the imposition of sanctions. A number of sanctions and remedies were imposed by the Sub Committee.
7. On 30 March 2016, the Town Clerk received a letter from the Respondent outlining his intention to appeal the decisions taken by the Hearing Sub Committee. The written grounds for appeal were received on 12 April 2016.

8. TBC – APPEAL PROCESS/OUTCOME

Activities of the Committee during 2015/16

9. Below is a brief synopsis of the activities undertaken by the Committee in 2015/16.

Code of Conduct – Guidance to Members

10. 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.
11. A revised version of the Code and the introduction of a mandatory registration regime for gifts and hospitality was 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 1st January 2015.
12. In November 2015, a revised version of the 'Guidance to Members' document which is intended to accompany and inform the Corporation's Members' Code of Conduct was sent to all elected Members. The Standards Committee felt that it was timely to review this document as, over recent months, it became increasingly apparent that there were still some outstanding issues regarding how the Code should be interpreted.
13. It is hoped that the revised guidance issued will provide Members with greater clarity on certain issues whilst also removing any unnecessary additional obligations. Some of the main changes to highlight are the removal of the need to provide an approximate value of any gifts/hospitality declared. This was something that was frequently problematic to Members and is not, in fact, a requirement of the Code. Secondly, the Committee attempted to provide some further examples of what type of information Members might need to provide against their declarations and those types of items that need not be declared at all. The Committee was also keen for Members to be conscious of where their private/business activities might cross over or be perceived to cross over with their City of London activities and vice versa.

14. Finally, a new, dedicated, email address to which all future declarations of gifts and hospitality should now be sent was set up at the Committee's request. The address is **delarations@cityoflondon.gov.uk**. This mailbox is staffed by a number of Officers within the Committee and Member Services Team and removes the need for Members to contact a single, named Officer with their declarations.

Annual Update to the Members' Declarations

11. The Committee were pleased to note that, as at July 2015, all elected Members had responded to the Annual Update process. All new Members elected to the Court since this date are also fully compliant.
12. A further annual update to the Members' Declarations will take place in July 2016 in accordance with the requirements in the Members' Code of Conduct. Each of the City of London Corporation's elected Members will be contacted in writing. The Standards Committee are keen to highlight, to all Members, the importance of the annual update process.
14. Where necessary, Members of the Court are routinely submitting updates to their register of interest and the registers are updated on-line.
15. 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 those Co-opted Members who sit on the City Corporation's statutory bodies and/or have voting rights.

Gifts and Hospitality - Ceremonial Officeholders

17. This year, the Committee have continued to progress the proper registration and publication of declarations of gifts and hospitality for Ceremonial Office Holders.
18. As of July 2015, all gifts and hospitality received by the Lord Mayor are published on the Corporate webpages. There are also links between the Lord Mayor's pages and the office holders existing register of interests. 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.
19. With regard to the other ceremonial office holders, namely the Sheriffs, the Old Bailey have followed the example set by Mansion House in terms of the registering of gifts and hospitality. These arrangements have been in place since the beginning of the most recent Shrievalty in September 2015.
19. The new provisions ensure that there is greater transparency about the gifts and hospitality received by ceremonial officeholders and the Committee currently review the arrangements and scrutinise the registers on a quarterly basis.

Recommendation

19. It is recommended that:-

- (i) the contents of the annual report be noted; and,
- (ii) in accordance with the Committee's terms of reference, the annual report be referred to the Court of Common Council for information.

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