

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Standards Committee	19 May 2017
<b>Subject:</b> Draft Annual Report of the Standards Committee	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> The Town Clerk	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report Author:</b> 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 no allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct were made to the Committee during the course of 2016/17.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that:-

- (a) the contents of the annual report be approved; 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, no allegations of breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct have been made to the Committee during the course of 2016/17.

#### **Activities of the Committee during 2016/17**

4. Below is a brief synopsis of the activities undertaken by the Committee in 2016/17.

## **Independent review of the City of London Corporation's standards framework**

5. In June 2016, the Court took the decision to refer back the Committee's 2015/16 Annual Report. In view of this, it was the Committee's firm view that radical steps needed to be taken in order to re-establish the standing of the Standards Committee in the Court.
6. The Committee reported further to the Court, on 21 July 2016, advising Members of its intention to commission an independent, broadly-based review of the arrangements currently in place for addressing matters connected with the conduct of Members (including co-opted Members) under the Localism Act 2011 with particular focus on the Complaints Procedure (alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct). The choice of the individual to undertake the review was left entirely to the Town Clerk to decide and he appointed Mr Charles Bourne QC of 11 King's Bench Walk to carry out the task.
7. The Standards Committee Annual Report was also amended and resubmitted to the Court of Common Council for information at this same meeting in July 2016.
8. As part of Mr Bourne's review process, written submissions were sought from all directly elected and co-opted Members from the outset. Mr Bourne met subsequently with Members of the Standards Committee and then, on a one-to-one basis, with a number of other Members. A meeting with Mr Bourne also took place on 7 November 2016 to which all Members were invited to enable further consultation and input into the process.
9. In January 2017, the report detailing Mr Bourne's findings, together with his recommendations, was presented by the Standards Committee to the Court of Common Council for information. The Standards Committee suggested that they should now be tasked with reviewing Mr Bourne's report in detail and reporting back to the Court during 2017 as to how the various recommendations might best be progressed and implemented, as appropriate.
10. The Court disagreed with this recommendation and, and instead, agreed that :  
"a Panel be established by resolution of this Court today comprising the Chairman of the Standards Committee, the Chairman of Policy & Resources, the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen and the Chief Commoner with power to act and to appoint a Working Party to report to this Court as soon as is practicable during this year on how the various recommendations in Mr Bourne's Report might be progressed and implemented as appropriate".
11. This Panel met on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017, with each Panel Member presenting a list of names of members who they considered to have the right qualities to serve on the new Working Party. After careful consideration, a consensus was reached as to the final ten Members who would be approached to serve.
12. The newly formed 'Standards Regime Review Working Party' have now met on two occasions and the Standards Committee eagerly awaits their suggestions

as to how the various recommendations within Mr Bourne's report might best be progressed.

### **Membership and composition of the Standards Committee**

13. The Standards Committee comprises twelve Members, four of whom are co-opted and are independent from the City Corporation. 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.
14. In June 2016, one of the Committee's four Co-opted Members chose to step down with immediate effect due to her departure from the UK to work abroad. It was the Committee's view that the recruitment of a new Co-opted Member should commence as soon as possible. An advertisement for this position was posted on the City Corporation's Website and within 'City AM' in October 2017 following final sign-off from the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.
15. A total of six applications were received and reviewed by the appointment panel consisting of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Standards Committee, the Chief Commoner and the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen. Following assessment by the Panel, three candidates were invited to interview with one candidate subsequently withdrawing from the process before interview due to ongoing ill health.
16. Two candidates were therefore interviewed by the Panel but, unfortunately, neither was considered appropriate. The recruitment process has been paused for the time being but will be re-visited later this calendar year. The Committee will be giving consideration as to how the position might be advertised more widely and how they might engage with more relevant organisations around this.

### **Annual Review of Protocol on Member/Officer relations**

17. In October 2016, the Committee undertook its annual review of the Protocol on Member/Officer relations. At this point it was agreed that the Member/officer Protocol, which was amended to include more specific reference to equality and diversity, be appended to both the 'Guidance on the Members Code of Conduct' and Employee Code of Conduct in order to make the connection between these documents and the fact that the Protocol should be viewed in conjunction with them abundantly clear.
18. Two Member Development sessions on the Member/Officer Protocol took place in 2016, with the Chairman of the Standards Committee writing to all directly elected and Co-opted Members strongly encouraging them to attend on the back of the recent complaint dealt with by the Committee. The Committee were informed that approximately 50 directly elected and Co-opted Members attended across the two sessions. The Comptroller and City Solicitor informed the Committee that he was very aware of the need to promote the Protocol amongst both Officers and Members and has now also hosted further sessions

focusing on this in March/April 2017 for both new and returning elected Members.

### **Gifts and Hospitality - Ceremonial Officeholders**

19. This year, the Committee have continued to receive reports on Gifts and Hospitality for both the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs.
20. All gifts and hospitality received by the Lord Mayor continue to 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.
21. 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 September 2015.
22. The new provisions ensure that there is greater transparency about the gifts and hospitality received by ceremonial officeholders.

### **Recommendation**

23. It is recommended that:-
  - (i) the contents of the annual report be approved; and,
  - (ii) in accordance with the Committee's terms of reference, the annual report be referred to the Court of Common Council for information.

### **Gemma Stokley**

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