



## **Policy and Resources Committee (Supplementary – For Information Agenda Pack)**

**Date:** THURSDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2024  
**Time:** 1.45 pm  
**Venue:** COMMITTEE ROOMS, 2ND FLOOR, WEST WING, GUILDHALL

### **3. MINUTES**

To consider minutes as follows:-

- b) \* To note a public summary of the Competitiveness Advisory Board meeting on 31 January 2024 (Pages 3 - 4)

### **15. \* DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY OR URGENCY POWERS**

Report of the Town Clerk.

**Ian Thomas CBE**  
**Town Clerk and Chief Executive**

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## **Competitiveness Advisory Board**

*Summary of the Competitiveness Advisory Board meeting held on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024.*

The Board held its first meeting of the year in January 2024. At this meeting the views of the Board Members were sought on skills and talent gaps facing UK FPS, deepening the impact of the UK Regions and Nations Strategy, and addressing metrics in the coming year.

The board received a report from the Executive Director of Innovation and Growth focusing on the skills and talent gaps facing UK FPS, including benchmarking metrics, further detail of which was received later in the meeting. Discussion points by Members included the reducing presence and retention of women in UK FPS, which also included other industries such as tech. Discussion also centred on Artificial Intelligence (AI), and how increasing adoption of AI could provide opportunities for upskilling in areas such as cybercrime. There could be an opportunity to use this skills shortage to attract women. Members also discussed socio-economic inclusion with FPS and connecting this to training and reskilling, and encouraged the continuation of the work on cross-border remote working.

The board considered the review of the UK Regions and Nations Strategy, and noted the accomplishments made to date, and the plans for the coming three years which would be focused on capital flows and connecting all the UK to growth. The board also focused its discussions on regional partners, including the work on shared objectives, outcomes and work programmes, and the prevention of divergent messaging. Members noted the regional specialisations, particularly on technology and the need to consider deepening engagement with partners in the West of England.

Members received the 2024 Benchmark report, noting that London was the top ranked global financial centre. Suggestions and discussion points centred on future metrics covering and ensuring closer identification with digital, technology, AI, sustainability, FDIs, and broadband speed and infrastructure. References were also made to training and re-skilling gaps and opportunities discussed earlier in the meeting. Members also discussed addressing the lack of enthusiasm and confidence for risk capital. It was raised that this lack of enthusiasm was partly cultural, but also a lack of easily accessible financial education.

The meeting closed with Members discussing the potential for a 'concierge' service for bringing in FDI into the UK market. Members raised points including the need to prevent duplication with services already provided by London based and regional partners. The board agreed that there was potential with such a service, and that further discussion with potential partners should be had to develop the idea further.

*For any enquiries relating to the Competitiveness Advisory Board, please contact [Blair.Stringman@CityofLondon.gov.uk](mailto:Blair.Stringman@CityofLondon.gov.uk)*

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<b>Committee(s)</b> Policy & Resources Committee – for information	<b>Dated:</b> 22/02/2024
<b>Subject:</b> Decisions taken under delegated authority or urgency powers	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	See Background Report
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	See Background Report
<b>If so, how much?</b>	See Background Report
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	See Background Report
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?</b>	See Background Report
<b>Report of:</b> Town Clerk	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Chris Rumbles, Town Clerk’s Department	

### Summary

This report advises Members of action taken by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, in accordance with Standing Order Nos. 41(a) and 41(b).

### Main Report

#### **Urgent Decision: Amendment to Standing Orders to reflect repeal of Section 618 of the Housing Act 1985**

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Section 618 of the 1985 Act, which applied uniquely to the City of London, provides that the Common Council may establish a Committee to discharge its functions under the Act consisting of such persons as it sees fit. That provision continues to be required for the Common Council’s discharge of its housing functions. Subsections (3) and (4), however, provided:-

*“(3) A person is not, by reason only of the fact that he occupies a house at a rental from the Common Council, disqualified from being elected or being a member of that Council or any committee of that Council; but no person shall vote as a member of that Council, or any such committee, on a resolution or question which is proposed or arises in pursuance of this Act or the Housing Associations Act 1985 and relates to land in which he is beneficially interested.*

*(4) A person who votes in contravention of subsection (3) commits a summary offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale; but the fact of his giving the vote does not invalidate any resolution or proceeding of the authority.”*

Members of the then Standards Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee initially instructed the Remembrancer in March 2020 to look into the possibility and implications of pursuing a repeal of these provisions. Legislation was finally passed in December 2023 repealing the relevant part of section 618 of the Housing Act 1985 and, as such, the Governance and Member Services Team, following correspondence with the Comptroller & City Solicitor and the Remembrancer, wrote to all Members to set out the new position as follows:

*“The provisions of s.618 of the Housing Act 1985 which made it a criminal offence for a member to vote on housing management issues in relation to land in which they were beneficially interested have now been repealed. These provisions previously imposed an additional restriction on voting which could not be over-ridden by a dispensation.*

The position now is that if a decision would engage a member’s disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI) in land i.e. where the matter before the meeting could reasonably be said to appear to be likely to affect their DPI, or where a member of the public would consider that they might be influenced by their DPI, then it is likely that they will have a DPI in the matter being considered and may not speak or vote without a dispensation.

That means:

1. There are no restrictions on speaking or voting where a member does not have a DPI in the matter being considered.
2. If they do have a DPI in the matter being considered then current dispensations to speak and/or vote apply.
3. A member may seek a new dispensation to speak and/or vote, which will be considered according to the published criteria.
4. If in doubt they should seek advice.”

Members were also informed that, as a result of this change in legislation, our own governance document entitled ‘Policy and Guidance on the Granting of Dispensations’ which can be found on our public webpages would require a minor editorial change through the deletion of paragraphs 22 and 23, which referred to the now repealed provisions of section 618. The permission of the Comptroller & City Solicitor, in consultation with the Chief Commoner (as Chair of MDSSC) and the Chairman of Policy & Resources Committee, was duly sought to make this minor editorial change without further delay. Permission was granted and the amended version is now publicly available to all.

Members were further informed that similar tweaks would be required to our Standing Orders to delete the equivalent restriction on voting that mirrored section 618 (at SO44(2)). This Standing Order currently states that:-

*2. If a matter for decision relating to the City of London Corporation’s Housing or Barbican Residential Estates is under consideration by the Court, or any Committee thereof, which relates to land in which a Member has a beneficial interest they:-*

*(a) must declare the existence and nature of their interest;*

*(b) subject to the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and the Members' Code of Conduct in relation to interests may speak but not vote thereon.*

Under SO44(1) Members would still be required to act in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and the Members' Code of Conduct where they have an interest.

Any proposal to amend Standing Orders must be considered by the Policy & Resources Committee whose recommendations shall be reported to the Court for approval. Thereafter, the Town Clerk is authorised to make the necessary amendments.

Officers considered that the use of urgency procedures in this case would provide for timely amendment of our relevant, internal, governance documents in order to provide consistency and clarity to all in terms of the new position on this matter.

**REASON FOR URGENCY:**

There was potential for some confusion as to the City Corporation's internal position/guidance offered on this matter in delaying the updating of our relevant Corporate Governance documents until the next formal Court of Common Council meeting in March 2023 given that all elected Members have now been issued with a summary of the revised position and that the law around this has already changed. Many Members are keen to see our own documentation amended in line with the new legal position as soon as possible.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of both the Member Development and Standards Sub-Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee resolved to recommend to the Court of Common Council that the necessary amendment to Standing Orders (e.g. the deletion of SO 44(2)) be made without further delay to reflect the current legal position following the repeal of subsections (3) and (4) of Section 618 of the Housing Act 1985.

In accordance with Standing Orders 41 (a) and 41 (b), Members are asked to note the recent decision taken by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

Copies of background papers concerning this decision are available from Chris Rumbles on request.

**Contact:**

Chris Rumbles

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