

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND STANDARDS SUB COMMITTEE
Friday, 21 July 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Member Development and Standards Sub Committee
held at on Friday, 21 July 2023 at 9.00 am

Present

Members:

Deputy Ann Holmes (Chief Commoner) (Chairman)
Alderman Alison Gowman
Naresh Hari Sonpar
Eamonn Mullally
Anthony David Fitzpatrick
Eamonn Mullally

In attendance

Helen Fentimen (Deputy Chairman)
Munsur Ali
Deputy Nighat Qureishi

Officers:

Greg Moore	-	Town Clerk's Department
Polly Dunn	-	Town Clerk's Department
Gemma Stokley	-	Town Clerk's Department
June Haynes	-	Town Clerk's Department
Edward Wood	-	Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Deputy Keith Bottomley, Deputy Simon Duckworth, Deputy Christopher Hayward, John Griffiths, and Deputy Edward Lord.

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The sub-committee's terms of reference were received.

4. STANDARDS UPDATE

The Sub-Committee considered the joint report of the Town Clerk & Chief Executive and Comptroller & City Solicitor containing four separate elements.

Members noted the process and timetable for recruiting three additional Independent Persons. Members were content for an Independent Person to be involved in the drafting of the advertisement and other documents, as their knowledge and experience of the role would be useful. However it was not

considered appropriate to include an Independent Person in the shortlisting and interview elements.

Members also noted the work already undertaken by the Civic Affairs Sub-Committee to produce a new Members' Code of Conduct. The Comptroller & City Solicitor explained that a full report would be brought to a subsequent meeting to provide a detailed comparison between the current Code, the LGA Model Code and the proposed hybrid document.

In response to a question, the Comptroller & City Solicitor confirmed that the existing Code was still fit for purpose, as it was very similar to the Codes of Conduct in operation elsewhere, contained the necessary provisions on disclosable pecuniary interests under the Localism Act 2011 and was consistent with the Seven Principles of Public Life.

In response to a further question, the Comptroller & City Solicitor confirmed that both the current Code and the proposed Code contained provisions on the non-disclosure of confidential information.

The Sub-Committee were in agreement with the proposed changes to the Complaints Procedure, which would emphasise the existing arrangements for Members to address concerns about the conduct of other Members through the Chief Commoner and the Aldermanic Chairs, prior to any formal complaint being made.

However, Members requested that the word "grievance", where it appeared in the draft text, should be substituted by an alternative term. Members also made some minor comments on the drafting and layout of the complaint form which officers agreed to take away.

The Sub-Committee were in agreement with colleagues on the Civic Affairs Sub-Committee that Code of Conduct training should be mandatory. Officers undertook to bring a report back to a future meeting incorporating any additional Member remarks and setting out the various options in more detail.

Members commented that record keeping would be essential, with the data captured in a central place. It would also be useful, as in other learning environments, if Members could receive training online, with a quiz at the end of the session which they would be required to pass. This should also be coupled with the traditional delivery mechanism of face-to-face sessions and recordings made available online for the purposes of a refresher.

The Chair suggested that training materials should be made available as background reading that Members could access in advance of attending. This would allow more time during the sessions for questions and answers and possible scenarios to assist with the learning.

The Sub-Committee agreed that appropriate scheduling of the sessions would be crucial to ensure that all Members had access, including those elected

outside of the four yearly cycle. Refresher training every two years was mooted as a possible minimum requirement, following the initial Member induction.

The Committee RESOLVED:

- To note the latest position on the recruitment of three additional Independent Persons;
- To approve the revised Complaints Procedure at Appendix 1 (as amended) for onward consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee and the Court of Common Council;
- To note the current position on producing a new Members' Code of Conduct;
- To approve the principle of mandatory Code of Conduct training for Members, with implementation to be considered in more detail at a future meeting.

5. **MEMBERS' LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT - FUTURE PROGRAMME**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk concerning the Members' Learning and Development Future Programme. As previously reported to the Member Learning and Development Steering Group, the Member Learning and Development (L&D) Strategy comprised the delivery of a themed rolling programme, communication with Members, monitoring and evaluation of existing sessions in a bid to influence future offerings, and associated budgetary provision. The launch of the strategy had slipped to September 2023.

The initial theme would focus on leadership activities and updates, to include charring skills. Captured in this subject, Members should be made aware of the purpose and function of the role of Chair in the City-specific sense, incorporating those functions and responsibilities which fell to them outside of the formal committee setting, to enable better understanding of the role and inform improved participation. It was noted that ad hoc Member requests remained an essential part of the programme.

The Sub-Committee expressed some concern that co-opted Members were sometimes excluded from the L&D offerings. It was noted that some sessions might not be appropriate for external Members and that consideration would be necessary on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the views of the presenting officer. There would also need to be a discussion in terms of budgetary pressures; however, this should be considered and it was noted that it should be possible for those co-opted Members with a City Corporation account to access any offerings that had been recorded, via the Members' Portal.

Members discussed free training sessions which were advertised to them directly from external providers, with it asked that they forward these

communications to the Town Clerk to investigate their validity and usefulness as a source of provider.

RECEIVED.

6. MEMBERS' DIGITAL PLATFORM

The Town Clerk introduced the Committee to the draft Members' digital platform (the 'Member Portal') and gave some background information, explaining that the portal would be used as a communication tool as part of the Member L&D Strategy, which would sit alongside the rolling programme.

The proposal would be to provide Members with guidance and information ranging from latest relevant news and event dates, to how to keep their register of interest updated, access to L&D sessions and recordings, booking committee lunches in the Guildhall Club, access to the Pocket Book, and so on. The maintenance of the page would be delivered by the Governance & Member Services team who would seek to ensure that it was a living page. The platform would be in line with corporate policy, being fully accessible to all and the content would be subject to validation.

It is proposed to launch the platform in September 2023 and to provide Members with a selection of drop dates to demonstrate the portal; it was noted that the development of the site would be iterative, with a view to adding content and functionality over time as Members grew more comfortable with the Portal. It was also hoped that, with IT support, it would be possible to enable the profiling of the Portal so that each individual Member's page had an element of personal tailoring.

Members agreed to provide the Town Clerk with any additional suggestions.

RECEIVED.

7. DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Member Development and Standards Sub-Committee noted the dates of future meetings, viz.:-

Friday 15th September 2023, 11.00am, West Wing, Guildhall

Friday 15th December 2023, 11.00am, West Wing, Guildhall

Friday 8th March 2024, 11.00am, West Wing, Guildhall

8. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE

None.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

No items of other business that the Chair considered urgent were received.

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED - That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds

that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

11. **INDEPENDENT REVIEW**
The Sub-Committee considered and approved a report of the Town Clerk relating to an independent review.
12. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There was one question, relating to a recent training session.
13. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**
There were no urgent items
14. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**
MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND STANDARDS SUB COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, 21 JULY 2023

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

By virtue of paragraphs 1 & 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

10. **INDEPENDENT REVIEW**
The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk which proposed an independent review of Member Behaviour, to be conducted by the Local Government Association (LGA).

Members were made aware of the background and the desire to conduct an independent review of Member behaviour, following which they expressed support for the proposal. However, in discussing the specifics of the review, it was felt that the proposed timings (and therefore associated cost provisions) might be insufficient to support a fully effective review. Echoing the comments made, the Chief Commoner, in the Chair, suggested that an all-Member survey, in addition to the proposed one-to-one interviews, might add substance to the findings.

Reference was also made to the need for an agreed position in respect of what acceptable behaviour looked like in practice, and the recent work undertaken in this regard by Eamon Mullally. With Mr Mullally's consent, it was felt that this document should be provided to the Reviewer to help inform their detailed methodology.

RESOLVED: That Members:-

1. Note the information in the report and approve the proposal for the LGA to conduct an independent review of Member behaviour;
1. Authorise the Town Clerk to make a request for such funding as may be required from the Policy and Resources Contingency Fund for this purpose;
2. Approve the suggested timetable for delivery (outlined in Appendix 1), with the Town Clerk authorised to agree such changes as may be required.

12. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

The Chair discussed one matter relating to the work of the Committee.

The Chair provided some feedback received following the recent LGA training “attending a successful meeting”. It was felt that the facilitator had paid too much attention to the first part of the session, leaving insufficient time to the remainder of the session. In addition, it was felt that some of the content had been somewhat basic and not all experiences had been recognised and catered to.

In response to a query, it was advised that the facilitator had provided feedback to officers that they had not anticipated the high levels of engagement at the earlier part of the session and had wanted to allow delegates to share their experiences before moving on; however, with hindsight, better management of this aspect might have been conducive to a more effective session. Officers added that the feedback had been helpful in identifying the need to establish Members’ objectives and expectations of sessions in advance of scoping future sessions with providers.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 10.32am

Chairman

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