

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND STANDARDS SUB COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 17 July 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Member Development and Standards Sub Committee
held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Wednesday, 17 July
2024 at 11.00 am

Present

Members:

Deputy Peter Dunphy (Chair)
Steve Goodman OBE
Deputy Charles Edward Lord
Eamonn Mullally
Philip Woodhouse

Officers:

	- Assistant Town Clerk, Executive Director, Governance & Member Services
	- Town Clerk's Department
Gemma Stokely	- Town Clerk's Department
Matthew Cooper	- Media Officer
Michael Cogher	- Comptroller and City Solicitor
Edward Wood	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Deborah Bell	- Community & Children's Services Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Alderman Alison Gowman, Deputy Keith Bottomley, and Deputy Ann Holmes.

Helen Fentimen and John Griffiths also issued apologies, but observed the meeting online.

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

There were no declarations.

3. PUBLIC MINUTES

The subcommittee considered the public minutes and non-public summary of their last meeting held on 8 March 2024.

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2024 be approved as a correct record.

4. MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT

The subcommittee was asked to consider several points raised during a consultation process undertaken with all members, co-opted members and

independent persons to update the Members' Code of Conduct. The following main points were discussed and agreed:

Definition of Antisemitism

Members discussed the inclusion of the definition of Antisemitism as defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). A member raised a concern over the definition's references to the state of Israel and expressed wariness of the Corporation's involvement and stance on international matters. Another member said that the definition covered more than the state of Israel and the definition was included only as an example. In response to a question, Members were informed that this definition was the one originally commended for adoption by the UK Government and London Councils, that was included in the Corporation's current Code of Conduct. The subcommittee agreed that there had been an increase in many types of discrimination recently, and that removing the definition, as an example, might cause more concern. When put to a vote, the Subcommittee was four members for retention of this definition and one member against its retention.

Register of Interests

Deputy Lord declared an interest in this item as a Freemason.

Members discussed the suggestion that individual Masonic lodges should be registered, and in particular, Guildhall Lodge. It was unanimously agreed that there should be no change to the draft Code of Conduct regarding Freemasonry, but that when the accompanying Guidance was updated this should make clear that Guildhall Lodge is an example of a Club or Society active in the City of London, that ought to be registered.

Requirement to co-operate with any investigation or determination

Members discussed the inclusion of the Local Government Association (LGA) wording that required members to co-operate with the complaints process. It was acknowledged that some members had historically chosen not to participate due to their concerns over the process. It was also queried whether a member should be subject to a further complaint for failing to co-operate. However, on the whole this was felt to be a reasonable requirement. The subcommittee unanimously agreed to retain this wording.

Other Points

Members agreed to increase the visibility of the guidance on the Nolan Principles by including a hyperlink to the Government webpage and by specifically referencing Appendix A in paragraph 6 of the draft Code of Conduct. Members also agreed to insert the requirement to treat others with respect in the section on Leadership in Appendix A, that had been omitted from the LGA model Code.

Members discussed reducing the value of gifts and hospitality that must be registered from £100 to £50. However, following discussion, it was agreed that this figure should be kept at the same level as in the Corporation's current Code of Conduct. It was noted that the Corporation's existing and proposed arrangements also included the registration of gifts and hospitality with a

cumulative value of £200, which would capture smaller amounts if they formed part of a larger or more significant pattern.

The proposed requirement for mandatory training for all members on the Code of Conduct was also mentioned. Members were informed that member training would be discussed in a separate item later in the meeting.

RESOLVED, that the draft Code of Conduct as amended should be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee for further consideration.

5. **INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF MEMBER BEHAVIOUR (LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION) – PROPOSED ACTION PLAN**

The Subcommittee was presented with a proposed action plan following the independent review of member behaviour.

Members discussed the importance of the Chief Commoner and their unique position to aide in upholding member behaviour. It was suggested that the Chief Commoner, along with any past chief commoners, should be the main contact for informal discussions both reaching out to and listening to concerns regarding member behaviour. It was discussed that the informality of this practice would allow for more leeway and encourage more conversations to happen earlier.

The subcommittee also discussed the benefits of having a buddy system for new members. All were in favour of the buddy system, with the experienced buddies encompassing a range of all members from the court, not just the ward deputies.

RESOLVED, that the Action Plan be recommended to the Grand Committee for approval and adoption with ministration by the Subcommittee.

6. **PANEL OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS - REPORT**

The subcommittee received a report on the panel of independent persons.

In response to questions, Members were informed that the panel are only paid when they are working and that they declare their interests, as published on the Corporation's webpage.

The subcommittee raised concerns that some cases were dismissed as they did not meet the assessment material, and that all complaints should be acknowledged. Concerns were also raised about the severity of sanctions and their implementations.

Members were informed that the Court has been in risk of breaching Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 twice by vilifying and demeaning the standards regime. They were reminded that all members need to be aware and understand the risks being taken by not following the agreed process.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

7. **MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

The subcommittee received an update on member learning and development.

Members expressed their concern over the lowest attendance records at the trainings. Members were informed that the topics of training sessions offered was compiled following requests from the court. It was also discussed how best to advertise these sessions to members.

RESOLVED, that this report be noted.

8. **MEMBER INDUCTION ARRANGEMENTS 2025**

The subcommittee considered arrangements for member inductions following the 'all-out' elections in March 2025.

The members agreed that the majority of sessions would be of interest to all members and were informed that all sessions would be available to the wider court. Members indicated that some sessions, for example code of conduct training and what to expect as a member, would be beneficial to have pre-elections to ensure that those running are aware of the demands and obligations of the post. In response to a question, the subcommittee was informed that the budget was modest due to the fact that most training is done in-house.

Suggestions for session topics included The City's relationship to the Liveries, Ward structure, and the role of Ward Deputies.

RESOLVED, that the member induction arrangements for 2025 be agreed and implemented.

9. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The subcommittee considered the non-public minutes of their last meeting held on 8 March 2024.

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2024 be approved as a correct record.

10. **QUESTION ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED.**

There was none.

The meeting ended at 12.52 pm

Chair

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