

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND STANDARDS SUB COMMITTEE
Friday, 8 March 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Member Development and Standards Sub Committee
held at COMMITTEE ROOM, 2ND Floor. GUILDHALL on Friday, 8 March 2024 at
11.00 am

Present:

Members:

Deputy Ann Holmes (Chief Commoner) (Chair)
Deputy Peter Dunphy (Chief Commoner Elect)
Anthony David Fitzpatrick
John Griffiths
Alderman Alison Gowman
Deputy Charles Edward Lord
Eamonn Mullally
Naresh Hari Sonpar

Observing Virtually

Helen Fentimen (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Nighat Qureishi

Officers:

Greg Moore	- Deputy Town Clerk
Polly Dunn	- Assistant Town Clerk, Executive Director, Governance & Member Services
Gemma Stokely	- Town Clerk's Department
June Haynes	- Town Clerk's Department
Edward Wood	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Scott Caizley	- Community & Children's Services Department
Torriano Stewart	- Community & Children's Services Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Munsur Ali and Deputy Christopher Hayward. Helen Fentimen and Deputy Nighat Qureishi 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 Sub-Committee considered the public minutes and non-public summary of their last meeting held on 15 December 2023.

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2023, be approved them as a correct record.

4. **MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Sub-Committee received an update from the Comptroller and City Solicitor regarding the outcome of a recent consultation which canvassed the comments and views from Members and co-optees in relation to the Members Code of Conduct. The Comptroller and City Solicitor will present a full report to the Sub-Committee at its next meeting.

RECEIVED.

5. **INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF MEMBER BEHAVIOUR (LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION)**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk which detailed recommendations and findings of the Local Government Association's independent review of Members behaviour. The review having been commissioned by the Town Clerk, supported by the Chief Commoner and Policy Chairman.

By way of consultation, the document had been shared with the full Court membership at their meeting of Informal Court in February 2024, this had allowed for discussion in advance of a formal response to this Sub-Committee, the Policy and Resources Committee and, ultimately, the Court of Common Council for adoption.

To further direct and instruct the Town Clerk in terms of next steps, the Sub-Committee reflected and responded to questions posed in paragraph 7 of the document, with the aim of, under delegated authority, instructing officers to devise an action plan to be further considered in advance of its adoption.

The Chief Commoner reflected on the code of conduct and sanctioned mandatory training for specific core elements such as the role of committee chairman, with the potential instruction that Members were unlikely to chair a committee if they had not completed the training.

The Town Clerk suggested a common-sense approach to the action plan which felt appropriate. Members acknowledged that implementation of the code required a key culture shift and that not all Members would engage and take responsibility for challenging poor behaviour.

The Sub-Committee discussed, in turn, the key points raised in paragraph 7 of the independent review document. Considering 7a of the paper, what does “good” look like, it was agreed that a Corporation Mission Statement was a good idea and could feature on the homepage of, the Corporation’s website. Members further suggested that in addition to what “good” looks like there should also be a statement, in the avoidance of doubt, referencing “what is not acceptable” behaviours. The Sub-Committee were conscious of the requirement to address the disconnect between what we think we are and how we are perceived as an organisation. Training and cultural competence would be incorporated alongside the Sub-Committee’s comments into the final document.

There were no changes suggested to 7b of the paper, which related to messaging around expectations and standards of behaviour. It was commented that this could be reinforced by the mission statement as it would appear on the intranet homepage.

The introduction of a “buddying” system for new Members was discussed at 7c, which was received and supported by the Sub-Committee, however the suggestion that a pool of ward deputies was not favoured or supported by Members generally and an alternative approach of a register of volunteers was preferred. It was recognised that seniority was not an indication of appropriateness for the role. Volunteers would be requested to provide a written statement with reasons why they felt they would make a good buddy, what experiences, skills and expertise they would bring to the role, this would give new Members a menu of choice and would also focus Members to update their own skills, expertise and interests register.

The Chief Elect commented that this approach could foster the buddying relationships for new Members as they join committees, the respective Chairs and Deputy Chairs as experts in the business and portfolio of their committee, imparting knowledge in terms of their role and responsibilities. The Town Clerk, reminded Members that some existing deputies were new to their role and to the Court in 2022 and they would have benefited from that level of support.

Mandatory training for chairs, as detailed in 7d of the document was not generally received well by Members as debated at Informal Court, some Members argued that the necessary skills had been acquired organically by serving on a committee. Some existing chairs had started the process of asking for feedback on their performance; this approach was welcomed by the Sub-Committee agreeing that feedback would support performance if done in a clear and dignified way and used as a period of reflection; the need for acceptance of negativity whilst still being enlightened. Members also considered chairs and deputies observing a range of committees to determine what “good” looks like. The Chief Elect discussed the possible introduction of an annual survey to measure chairs’ performance, this would capture those who had been either reluctant or unaware of others concerns. The Town Clerk was encouraged by the suggestion of an annual appraisal process, and proposed that a general service provision questionnaire for the Governance and Member Services Team could contain potential questions to help identify

where changes to committee conduct, process and procedure may be useful, alongside identifying training needs more broadly. This could be tested with the Sub-Committee to enable the identification of specific concerns are related to chairing.

Reflecting on comments made at 7e, measuring success in terms of the revised pre-complaint protocol, the Chief Commoner had successfully performed as an internal mediator for Member on Member complaints. There had been some appetite for the introduction of a similar process for Member on officer complaints.

The focus of “allyship” in 7f and the support for Members to call out bad behaviours, the Sub-Committee felt that this would be predominantly the role of the committee chair as they would be best placed to correct the situation without being personal and support from the EDI Sub-Committee as they could act as champions. Members commented that the City should also continue to aim to be a culture of openness and transparency, which is highlighted through the code of conduct, the build on an environment of learning and making better decisions which supports the City as a learning organisation whose commitment and aims were demonstrated through the Learning and Development Strategy.

The Sub-Committee were in agreement that once the document had comments incorporated the final report should be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee and then to the Court of Common Council for adoption.

RESOLVED: To note and considered the points raised (both at the Informal Court meeting in February 2024 and by direct response of the Town Clerk) in relation to the specific questions posed by the Reviewer and Sub-Committee as set out in paragraph 7 of the review and instruct the Town Clerk to bring forward final proposals to the Policy and Resources Committee and Court of Common Council for final adoption.

6. **DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Town Clerk and were advised of action taken since the last meeting, by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair, in accordance with Standing Order No. 41(b).

The Sub-Committee noted the action taken under urgent decision to amend Standing Orders to reflect repeal of Section 618 of the Housing Act 1985.

RECEIVED.

7. **STANDARDS UPDATE**

The Town Clerk reported that there were no outstanding live complaints, and that the single complaint received since the last meeting had been resolved informally.

At the annual meeting of Independent Persons, useful discussions had taken place which included outcomes and learning from recent cases. The Panel via

this Sub-Committee plan to submit a report to the Policy and Resources Committee and then to the Court of Common Council. The Chief Commoner expressed the hope that the pre-complaint protocol would continue to work well and limit the number of Member on Member complaints.

RECEIVED.

8. MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Town Clerk was considered by the Sub-Committee, which sought endorsement for sessions planned for Quarter 1 and provided a forward look at Quarter 2 of the Member Learning and Development rolling programme.

The Sub-Committee were disappointed with the low level of interest and poor attendance at sessions which had led to cancellation or deferment. The Chair discussed the provision of City-specific sessions, which had appeared to have no impact on attendance figures. The Town Clerk had thought creatively to improve attendance, sessions had been offered in various formats, hybrid, face-to-face etc; a variation of timings and days of the week had been trialled. Members suggested sending calendar invitations (as opposed to email alerts which tended to get lost in inboxes). The date would then be saved in Members' Outlook calendars. The Sub-Committee was in agreement that future sessions should be time limited to one hour unless the subject required longer. The competition for Members' time had been a contributing factor in attracting participation, and so this was considered a good idea for making the offerings a more attractive prospect. Recording sessions had not been successful in capturing post session viewers, which had been introduced in recognition of Members' time constraints. A Member suggested enabling Microsoft Word prompts or search tools in recording transcript, to 'bookmark' recordings which would reduce the requirement to view the entire video.

The Town Clerk provided an update on the portal and confirmed that since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee, working with several Members, including the Chair of the Digital Services Committee, useful suggestions had been made to refresh the look, feel and content of the page. A demonstration of this work would be provided to Members at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

Members endorsed the information technology focused sessions planned for Quarter 1 and the scoping of Quarter 2 offerings which would deliver City Corporation specific roles within the Court and supporting Members as community leaders.

RESOLVED:- That Members:

Note the report, considered and endorsed the content and direction proposed in respect of future offerings outlined in Quarter 1 (April to June 2024) and the potential offerings for Quarter 2 (July to September 2024).

9. NEW MEMBER INDUCTION PLANS 2025

The Town Clerk reported that in preparation for the delivery of the new Member induction programme 2025, discussions here would frame the content and delivery of a three month series of offerings. The positive feedback had been

taken into account from Members in 2022 and the aim was not to deviated from the existing format but to update and improve the content in 2025. The Town Clerk would seek to attract those returning Members, presenting the programme as an opportunity to refresh knowledge and to share their past experiences with newly elected Common Councillors.

Working with colleagues in Electoral Services, key dates would be made available to all candidates. Successful candidates will then be notified in good time of the dates of various receptions with the Chief Commoner, Policy and Resources Chairman and Town Clerk. Housekeeping, essentials (business cards etc) and equipment would be made available on launch day of the induction/refresher programme.

The current documentation, e-handbook and flyers, will require some update (for example, the new Corporate Plan). Officers are conscious not to overwhelm newly elected Members, therefore information would be phased to allow time for reading and digestion. The considerable amount of information would be kept relevant, and to a minimum. Our existing Members (elected in 2022) will have a significant part to play in the modification and delivery of this Induction Plan, as their experience and comments of their own first three months at the City Corporation, would be a valuable source of information. Some content can be emailed to allow for Members to consider at their leisure, coupled with recordings of sessions. Each Member will have available to them, a hard copy of the ehandbook at their adjourned Wardmote (i.e. when the results are announced).

At 12.10pm, the Chair left the meeting, the Chief Commoner Elect was in the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

The composition of the Sub-Committee is one that benefits from a varied range of experience and time served on the Court. Members elected in 2022 shared their experiences with the Sub-Committee. It was felt that a Freshers' Fair style "meet the officers" event would provide an opportunity to meet key staff groups with their department, imparting essential information and an explanation of where they sit within the City Corporation landscape, supported by a "cheat sheet" with specific areas of responsibility, giving direction and assistance to Members, this would act as a first post of call for future resolutions to ward related matters. The Governance and Member Services Team were looking to provide one-to-one sessions for Members with accessibility needs, to explore any reasonable adjustments that could be made that would assist the Member with the discharging of their duties.

There was recognition that external members and Co-optees would require an alternative level of support and would not feature in this aspect of the programme.

The management of recognised constraints around timings, resources and budgetary concerns were also highlighted.

RESOLVED: That Members noted the report and;

Agreed that the Member Induction Programme to be renamed the Member Induction/Refresher Programme.

10. **DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

RESOLVED: The Sub-Committee agreed the dates and times of future meetings.

Wednesday 17 July 2024, 11.00am

Thursday 24 October 2024, 11.00am

Thursday 30 January 2025, 11.00am

11. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATED TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

12. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There were no additional, urgent items of business for consideration.

13. **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.

Item No	Paragraph No(s).
14	1

14. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The Sub-Committee considered the non-public minutes of their last meeting held on 15 December 2023 and approved them as a correct record.

15. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions in the non-public session.

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

There were no additional, urgent items of business for consideration in the non-public session.

The meeting ended at 12.32 pm

Chairman

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