

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Member Development and Standards Sub-Committee – <i>For decision</i> Policy and Resources Committee – <i>For decision</i> Court of Common Council – <i>For decision</i>	Dated: 8 July 2025 18 September 2025 9 October 2025
Subject: Annual Report of the Panel of Independent Persons	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes	All
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Town Clerk
Report author:	Kate Doidge, Town Clerk's Department

Summary

This annual report presents activity undertaken by the Panel of Independent Persons in relation to both Complaints received under the Members' Code of Conduct and applications for dispensation since May 2024. This report has been placed by the Town Clerk's office in the usual format, in order to facilitate submission to the Member Development and Standards Sub-Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee ahead of its presentation to the Court of Common Council, where it will need to go as a report of the Policy and Resources Committee given that neither the Panel nor the Sub-Committee have any direct reporting mechanism.

This report also contains details of the Panel's recent recruitment activity and a request for a review of the Independent Person's day rate.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.
- Consider what action to take in relation to the request to review the Independent Person's day rate (paragraphs 15 – 17).

Main Report

Background

1. The Panel of Independent Persons (The Panel) was initially established by the City of London Corporation (the Corporation) by way of Court of Common Council Resolution on 14 January 2021. This was following an independent Governance Review of the City Corporation, which proposed the establishment of an Independent Panel composed only of independent persons (convening as smaller sub-Panels of three), to receive allegations of misconduct under the Code of Conduct, determine whether to investigate, present findings to the Court, and hear any appeal. The Panel also has responsibility for making recommendations as to whether or not dispensations should be granted or refused.
2. The Panel was formally established in July 2021, initially of nine members, with a further three members approved in October 2023, to bring the Panel to a total of twelve to ensure that adequate panel members were available to cover all necessary stages of a complaint noting that no one Independent Person may sit on more than one stage of the same complaint, but also to take into account availability and any potential conflicts of interest.
3. Details of all current members of the Panel can be found at Appendix 1. The Panel's current terms of reference are attached at Appendix 2 of this report, drafted by the Panel and subsequently received by the Court in October 2022.
4. Following the resignation of two Panel Members, the Panel currently sits at ten members. During its annual meeting, the Panel agreed that two existing Independent Persons would also 'rotate off' the Panel, ending their terms at the end of 2025, and allow for the recruitment of three (now four) new Independent Persons to the Panel. A recommendation on the recruitment of four new members of the Panel is envisaged to be presented to the Court of Common Council by December 2025, following a recruitment campaign to be held over the Autumn.
5. This report is being used by the Panel as the means of communicating its activity and the activity of all Assessment, Hearing, Appeal and Dispensations Sub-panels called to sit during the period May 2024 to June 2025.

Current Position

Operation of the Panel

6. The Panel operates within the framework of its terms of reference and all Panel members agree to follow the Nolan Principles and also the Code of Conduct in place for members and co-opted members of the Corporation. Each of the Panel members Register of Interests can be found [online](#). The Panel was chaired by Amanda Orchard until June 2025, with Robert Coyle chairing the Panel from June 2025. Tom Ketteley serves as Deputy Chair from June 2025. He replaces former Deputy Chair Gary Rogers who resigned in January 2025.
7. Eight full Panel meeting have taken place since July 2021. Agendas for these meetings are approved by the Chair. All full Panel meetings have been quorate in

line with the Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. The Panel currently arranges an annual meeting, with any further meetings arranged to suit organisational requirements. The Panel also take the opportunity to share best practice and undertake training relevant to their roles at full meetings. The most recent meeting was kindly hosted by the Chief Commoner in February 2025.

8. Administrative and legal support to the Panel and all sub-panels is provided through the Town Clerk's Department, and Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department, respectively. Where there may a perception that the Monitoring Officer's team might be in any way conflicted, or it is otherwise considered beneficial to obtain independent legal advice, external Counsel are called upon to assist the Panel.

Matters considered by the Panel from May 2024 – June 2025.

Dispensations

9. The Panel have been asked to make recommendations on two applications for a dispensation in this reporting period. The Panel would like to use this platform to encourage all seeking dispensations to complete the necessary applications in sufficient detail with reference to the guidance provided and in sufficient time so as to enable decisions to be taken.
10. The outcome of the recommendations for all requests for a dispensation are published in the Register of Dispensations [online](#). This also includes the certain types of straightforward requests for a dispensation that are granted by the Town Clerk via delegated authority, and those requests granted under urgency procedures by the Monitoring Officer.

Alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct

11. The Panel has considered one formal complaint in this reporting period, summarised below.
12. In accordance with the Complaints Procedure, the first determination at Assessment must be whether or not a complaint is admissible and meets the following tests:
 - (i) It is a complaint against one or more named members of the Corporation;
 - (ii) The named member was in office at the time of the alleged conduct and the code of conduct was in force at the time;
 - (iii) The complaint, if proven, would be a breach of the code of conduct under which the member was operating at the time of the alleged misconduct;
 - (iv) The complaint is about something that happened or came to light within the last three months, or is connected to alleged misconduct within the last three months, unless there are reasonable grounds for the complaint not having been made within that time period.

If the complaint fails one or more of these tests, it is deemed 'inadmissible' and cannot be investigated as a breach of the code and the complainant will be

informed by the Town Clerk that no further action will be taken in respect of this complaint.

13. Should a Member be found in breach of the Code, there are a number of sanctions available to the Panel to recommend. These must be reasonable and proportionate in all of the circumstances. The available sanctions for a breach of the code of conduct are:-

- (i) censure;
- (ii) withdrawal of Corporation hospitality for an appropriate period;
- (iii) removal from one or more committees;
- (iv) other action.

14. There is no power to impose any alternative sanctions, although the willingness of a member to co-operate in the matters listed below may have a bearing on any sanction that is imposed:-

- (i) that the member submits a written apology in a form specified;
- (ii) that the member undertakes specified training;
- (iii) that the member participates in such conciliation as is specified.

Matter No.	Source of Complaint	Alleged breaches of the Code	Outcome/Status
03 - 24	<i>Officers v Member</i>	<i>Failing to act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias; failing to actively promote and robustly support the Nolan principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs; failing to value your colleagues and officers of the Corporation and engage with them in an appropriate manner and one that underpins the mutual respect that is essential to good local governance; bringing your office or authority into disrepute; failing to uphold the Corporation's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 by promoting equality, and not discriminating</i>	<i>An initial request for anonymity was rejected by the Assessment Panel due to a lack of exceptional circumstances. A number of named officers then came forward. The Assessment Panel subsequently determined that, whilst the complaint was admissible, no further action should be taken given that the Subject Member had apologised.</i>

		<i>unlawfully against any person on the grounds of race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or age.</i>	
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Request from the Panel to Review the Day Rate.

15. At present, the Independent Persons have a daily attendance allowance of £300, and reasonable travel expenses are also reimbursed.
16. The Panel would like to use this platform to request that the day rate be reviewed, to ensure that it remains proportionate and appropriate. The current rate has remained unchanged since the Panel's inception in January 2021. Members are asked to consider what action they wish to take pertaining to this request.

Conclusion

17. Over the almost four-year period that the Panel has been active, a number of matters have been considered and refined as part of the formal Complaints Procedure now in operation, the latest of which have been presented in this report.
18. Compared to the previous year's report, the Panel have had fewer matters to consider (although the previous report covered a longer period of time). This may be connected to a successful deployment of the informal resolution mechanisms (with external mediation if agreeable by all parties) that are expressly included in the Complaints Procedure. There is also now a requirement that Member-on-Member complainants first explore a resolution with either the Chief Commoner, or the Chair of General Purposes Committee of Aldermen or the Chair of Nominations Committee of Aldermen, at an early stage.
19. The Panel's continued aim is for the complaints procedure they operate to be effective and efficient, accessible and widely understood by both members of the public and members of the Corporation alike.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Panel Membership and Terms of Appointment
- Appendix 2 – Panel Terms of Reference

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Appendix 1

PANEL MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

The current Independent Panel Members are:

Name	
Miranda Carruthers-Watt	Appointed 2021
Robert Coyle	Chair from June 2025 Appointed 2021
Chris Fraser	<i>Until the end of 2025</i> Appointed 2021
Amina Hossain	Appointed 2023
Tom Ketteley	Deputy Chair from June 2025 Appointed 2021
Karen McArthur	Appointed 2023
Amanda Orchard	Appointed 2021
Rahul Sinha	Appointed 2021
Phillip Thicknesse	<i>Until the end of 2025</i> Appointed 2021
Atiyyah Younis	Appointed 2021
Vacancy	
Vacancy	
Vacancy	
Vacancy	

PANEL OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS

Terms of Reference

Functions and Authority of the Panel

The Independent Persons Panel (the Panel) was established by the City of London Corporation Court of Common Council (the Corporation) by way of Court of Common Council Resolution on 14 January 2021.

The purpose and powers of the Panel is to establish and administer a Complaints Process and to also deal with the granting of Dispensations (the Scheme).

The Panel is to independently consider complaints made by anyone against an elected or co-opted member of the Corporation.

The Panel will also consider granting Dispensations for Members to participate in a particular item of business at a City Corporation meeting where a disclosable pecuniary interest exists that must be disclosed, relating to in any matter that is being considered.

The Panel has authority to develop the Policy on the process for dealing with complaints referring to any Sanctions that may be applied. The Panel is also authorised to consider Dispensations under the Scheme.

The Panel is responsible for providing from its membership, the persons to form Assessment, Hearing and Appeal Sub-panels, required to investigate and consider complaints, by informal and/or formal process under the Scheme.

The Panel considers all complaints referred to the Scheme and where formal process is followed will recommend to the Corporation the final outcome for approval. The Panel also issues the deciding determination on dispensation applications.

The Panel is responsible for developing a Policy for Publication of the outcomes of complaints, as recommended to the Corporation.

Membership

The Panel is formed of up to twelve members in total, comprised of all independent members.

All Panel members agree to follow the Nolan Principles and also the Code of Conduct in place for members and co-opted members of the Corporation.

The Panel will maintain a Register of Interests for all independent members which will be published on the City Corporation's Library webpages and updated regularly.

Independent panel members are selected by the Corporation. All appointments are for terms of up to two years, with a maximum of three terms being served.

Chair and Deputy Chair

The members of the Panel shall elect one of its members as Chair, and another member as Deputy Chair, both for a period of 12 months which can be renewed for a maximum of up to 36 months

Where the Chair is not present at a meeting, or is conflicted, the Deputy Chair will take the Chair for the meeting or for any conflicted item

Quorum, Frequency and Records of Panel Meetings

The Panel quorum is five.

The Panel will as standard meet annually each municipal year, but meetings may be cancelled or called more frequently if required.

The Panel shall hold additional meetings as required to deal with any business arising at the request of the Executive of the Corporation or at the request of two members of the Panel.

At least three weeks' notice of the time, date and venue of each Panel meeting shall be provided to all members. All relating paperwork will be issued to all no later than five clear working days before each meeting wherever possible.

It is acceptable for routine business to be conducted electronically.

The Secretariat of the Corporation will prepare minutes and provide each member with a copy. Such minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting and, subject to any amendment, agreed and will be signed by the Chair. The amendment of minutes shall not affect the validity of decisions taken by the panel in the meeting to which the minutes relate.

Duties

The Panel is responsible for establishing and maintaining a Complaints Process and applying the Sanctions Policy, both of which should be reviewed regularly

The Panel is also responsible for considering applications for dispensations submitted by Members.

The complaints process and any guidance will be available to all who want to make a complaint.

The Dispensations form and related guidance will be available to all who wish to submit an application for consideration.

The Panel, and its Sub-panels, are to have regard to the Complaints Process; any Sanctions specified in legislation or in any Sanctions Policy; the Policy and Guidance on the granting of dispensations under the Localism Act 2011; and the Members Code of Conduct when dealing with any complaints or dispensation requests before it.

All formal complaints and/or appeal recommendations will be referred to the Corporation for oversight approval. After the matter has been addressed by the Corporation the outcome will be published where the process requires this.

A recommendation or other outcome at any stage of the complaints process, will be recorded in writing and reported to the next full Panel meeting after the end of the full process for that complaint.

All determinations made by the Corporation will also be reported back to the Panel.

The Panel will adhere to best practice in terms of managing data and do so in line with the City of London Corporation Data Subject Rights Policy.

The Panel will produce an Annual Report that will be published.

Sub-Panels

Each Sub-panel will be comprised of up to three persons.

Appointments to Sub-panels will be undertaken on a rota basis. The Panel can select particular members for a complaint to replace any rota allocations, if specific skills are required to deal with a particular complaint. Also allocations should ensure, as far as possible, a mix of persons to each Sub-panel to reflect the range of diversity within the panel.

A panel member cannot be part of more than one Sub-panel for each individual complaint.

Voting mechanism

The Panel or any Sub-panel, may vote on and determine any matter arising at the meeting and each member present at the meeting shall have one vote.

Decisions of the Panel or any Sub-panel shall be by simple majority of the votes cast (excluding any abstentions).

Approved February 2025.