

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

30 January 2018 at 7.30 pm

MEMBERS: Mr Anthony Hazeldine (Chair), Mr David Wales (Vice-Chair), Peter Struik and Councillors Simon Wales, Tony Shields, Trish Fivey and Nick Emmerson

ABSENT Ifat Shah and Councillor Joyce Melican

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from the Independent Person, Ifat Shah.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2017 were approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. OPERATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Jessica Crowe, Monitoring Officer, presented the report which updated the committee on complaints received and dealt with since the last meeting.

Members discussed in particular the final complaint, and the procedure for disclosing pecuniary interests at committee and ensuring transparency.

RESOLVED: that

1. Action taken by the Monitoring Officer in dealing with complaints was noted and commented upon.
2. No further recommendations were made relevant to the committee's role and function in promoting high ethical conduct by members.

5. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Fiona Bywaters, Head of Committee and Management Support (Interim), presented the report which updated the committee on the member development programme and sessions scheduled since the last meeting.

Members discussed the key performance indicator relating to the open rate of the weekly member information bulletin, suggesting a lower open rate occurred during the busiest committee periods. The weekly planning application list was highlighted as particularly useful content of the bulletin, alongside links to published agendas, with Councillor Simon Wales encouraging more members to read it.

Members also discussed the core member development programme, reiterating that quasi-judicial training should be mandatory and Councillor Tony Shields emphasised that shorter and more focused sessions may improve attendance.

It was questioned as to whether there was an indicator to assess performance by Members. In response, the Monitoring Officer clarified that this tended to be led by political groups and the appropriate support provided by them.

Finally, the Independent Chair expressed his hope that a regular member development update would still be presented to the new Audit & Governance Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. The member development programme be noted.
2. The 2018/19 Member Development Strategy be noted in advance of the 2018 local elections.
3. The additional initiatives to support members, including the weekly information bulletin and Councillor Connect be noted.

6. UPDATE FROM COUNCIL, 29 JANUARY 2018

Jessica Crowe, Monitoring Officer, presented the report which updated the committee on constitutional changes and the appointment of independent persons agreed by Council on 29 January 2018.

The Independent Chair commented that this was a positive arrangement, expressing that the principal concern is not to lose the focus of the standards committee in the new arrangements.

Thanks were given by the Independent Chair and Councillors to the Independent Members for their many years of service and commitment to the borough.

RESOLVED: that

1. The recommendation to Council to appoint an Audit and Governance Committee to encompass the functions currently carried out by the Audit Committee and the Standards Committee effective following the Annual Council Meeting in May be noted.

2. The recommendation to Council to appoint Mr Geoffrey Beresford Hartwell, Mrs Ruth Pearson and Mr Neil Asten as the Council's Independent Persons in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 be noted.
3. The grateful thanks from Members to the outgoing Independent Members of the Standards Committee for their many years of dedicated voluntary public service in helping the authority uphold high standards of behaviour be noted.

7. ANY URGENT BUSINESS

No urgent business was raised.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

Chair:

Date: