

Standards Committee - Tuesday, 9 July 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held at Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on Tuesday, 9 July 2024 at 7.00 pm.

Present:	Councillors:	Hyde (Chair), Gill, Hayes and Ogunro
Also Present:	Independent Persons:	Robert Milne and Luke Rigg
	Officers:	Alison Stuart, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer Farida Hussain, Deputy Director of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer Philippa Green, Head of Democratic Services and Governance and Clerk to the Committee

Councillor Sara Hyde in the Chair

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (ITEM NO. 1)

None.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM NO. 2)

None.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (ITEM NO. 3)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

4 REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS (ITEM NO. 4)

The Chair introduced the item and asked members of the committee if they had any comments on the current Code of Conduct for Members.

Cllr Gill noted that the code seemed appropriate, in line with the Local Government Association model and other councils' codes.

The application of personal interests to a wider group of relatives than pecuniary interests was raised by one of the Independent Persons. It was noted that the Localism Act 2011 defined the individual relationships where pecuniary interests must be declared, and these specifically related to where a councillor would have a direct and specific financial interest. There is nothing in the Act which defines which relationships are relevant to Personal Interests and as a result, this is up to the Council to determine.

Standards Committee - 9 July 2024

The broader range of relationships that are relevant for Personal Interests also reflects that these are generally much more publicly known than a Councillor's financial interests and it therefore makes sense to ensure that these are declared, and the Council is as transparent as possible.

It was however noted that households are very varied, and, for example, some children are living with their parents for much longer than might have been the case once and as adults are making a significant contribution to the household income and therefore, if any Councillors are in this position, the financial interests of their children were potentially relevant.

It was agreed that Cllr Hyde will liaise with the Labour Group members to obtain their views on extending the relationships covered by pecuniary interest declarations. The Head of Democratic Services and Governance will liaise with the other political groups.

5 REVIEW OF THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH STANDARDS ALLEGATIONS (ITEM NO. 5)

An Independent Person queried the requirement in the procedure to consult with the Independent Person for all complaints once it has been determined that a complaint met the jurisdictional tests (paragraph 3.6 page 32 of the meeting papers). It was suggested, if this was not against the Local Government Association guidance, that the wording should be updated to state that the Monitoring Officer may consult the Independent Person, rather than will. Both Independent Persons confirmed that they were willing to be consulted on all complaints, but sometimes had difficulty responding at short notice. The Monitoring Officer will review the procedure.

The Chair noted that the committee members are only made aware of the complaints received in the Annual Report and requested that a quarterly update is circulated to the committee members. The content of the requested updates was discussed, and the Monitoring Officer will review possible templates to consider how to circulate the information to committee members whilst protecting confidentiality.

MEETING CLOSED AT 7.30 pm

Chair