

Law & Governance
7 Newington Barrow Way, London, N7 7EP

Report of: Interim Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Meeting of: Standards Committee

Date: 27 June 2023

Ward(s): N/A

Subject: Strengthening the role of Standards Committee

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. Since changes to the Council's Standards arrangements in 2012, Standards Committee has acted as 'hearings committee' and has not had oversight of the Code of Conduct for Members, the Annual Report on Member Standards and Conduct, which was submitted to Audit Committee, or on dispensations granted to members.
- 1.2. As part of the review of the respective roles of the Audit Committee and Standards Committee, it has been recommended that the role of Standard's Committee is extended in future, to maintain the Code of Conduct for members, encourage member engagement with the Code, receive the Annual Report on Member Standards and Conduct and grant dispensations.
- 1.3. At its meeting on 23 May, the Audit Committee supported a recommendation that Standards Committee receive the Annual Report on Member Standards and the purpose of this report is to seek agreement from Standards Committee to add this to the committee's Terms of Reference and to provide a past report as an example.
- 1.4. The report submitted to the Audit Committee meeting on 23 May also included the proposal that Standards Committee has the authority to grant dispensations to any member in respect of statutory and non-statutory disclosable interests. This report also seeks approval to add this to the Standards Committee Terms of Reference.

- 1.5. If approved, the Annual Report on Member Standards and Conduct will be submitted to Standards Committee annually for consideration, subject to Council agreeing the revised Terms of Reference proposed and meetings of the committee will be convened as required to consider any requests for dispensations.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To agree to receive the Annual Report on Member Standards and Conduct in future years.
- 2.2. To agree to accept responsibility for determining future requests for dispensations to any member in respect of statutory and non-statutory disclosable interests.
- 2.3. To agree to amend the Committee's Terms of Reference, as detailed in Appendix 1, subject to agreement by Council at its meeting in July.
- 2.4. To note the Annual Report for 2021/22 attached as Appendix 2.

3. Background

- 3.1. As part a review of the Council's governance arrangements, it was agreed that the Standards Committee, which operated as a 'hearing' committee and had not met for some years, should have a more active role and should have responsibility for encouraging effective engagement with the Code of Conduct for Members and have oversight over member complaint management procedures.
- 3.2. The transfer of this function from Audit Committee will strengthen the role of the Standards Committee and ensure that those members with responsibility for encouraging good conduct are aware of complaints received by the Council.

4. Implications

4.1. Financial Implications

- 4.1.1. There are no financial implications arising from to this report.

4.2. Legal Implications

- 4.2.1. The Council has a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co-opted Members (section 27(1) Localism Act 2011). The Council has adopted a Code dealing with the conduct that is expected of Members and Co-opted Members when they are acting in that capacity (as required by section 27(2) Localism Act 2011). The Code has been revised to incorporate the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020.

- 4.3. **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

4.3.1. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

4.4. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

4.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

4.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because an initial assessment of the impacts has been carried out and there are no equalities impacts arising from this report.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1. It is recommended that Standards Committee receives requests for dispensations and the Annual Report on Member Standards and Conduct in future years to ensure it can fully undertake its role.

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – revised Terms of Reference
- Appendix 2 – example of the Annual Report on Member Standards and Conduct

Background papers: None

Final report clearance - Authorised by:

Marie Rosenthal, Interim Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Date: 19 June 2023

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Legal Implications

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