

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 20 JULY 2010**

**ROOM M71, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON,  
E14 2BG**

**Members Present:**

Mr Patrick (Barry) O'Connor (Chair)

Ms. S. Bagum (Independent Member)

Councillor Zara Davis

Councillor Carli Harper-Penman

Mr R. Hopkins (Independent Member)

Councillor Anwar Khan

Mr Eric Pemberton (Independent Member)

Ms Sue Rossiter (Independent Member)

Mr Matthew William Rowe (Independent Member)

**Other Councillors Present:**

Councillor Kabir Ahmed

**Officers Present:**

Ruth Dowden – (Complaints Manager)

Isabella Freeman – (Assistant Chief Executive [Legal Services])

Amanda Thompson – (Team Leader - Democratic Services)

**1. ELECTION OF AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER AS CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE**

Amanda Thompson, Democratic Services, advised that prior to seeking nominations for an Independent Member to be Chair of the Committee, she needed to inform the Committee of the re-appointment of Mr Patrick O'Connor and the appointment of Ms Sue Rossiter as Independent Members which had been agreed by the Council at its meeting on 14 July 2010.

Mr Eric Pemberton MOVED that Mr Patrick O'Connor be elected Chair and this was SECONDED by Mr Matthew Rowe.

No further nominations were received and it was therefore

**RESOLVED**

That Mr Patrick O'Connor be elected Chair of the Standards Committee.

**2. ELECTION OF AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER AS VICE-CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE****MR PATRICK O'CONNOR IN THE CHAIR**

Amanda Thompson asked for nominations for an Independent Member to be Vice-Chair of the Committee.

The Chair MOVED that Mr Matthew Rowe be elected Vice-Chair and this was SECONDED by Mr Richard Hopkins.

No further nominations were received and it was therefore

**RESOLVED**

That Mr Matthew Rowe be elected Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee.

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Barry Lowe and Councillors Md. Maium Miah and Joshua Peck.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None received.

**5. MINUTES****RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 16 February 2010 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**6. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION****6.1 Standards Committee - Roles and Functions, Membership and Dates of Meetings**

Amanda Thompson introduced the report which detailed the roles and functions of the Committee, its membership and dates of meetings.

The Committee noted that in addition to the two appointments reported at the start of the meeting, there was still a third vacancy for an Independent member which was in the process of being recruited to.

In response to a question concerning the Councillor composition of the Standards Committee detailed at paragraph 4 a) of the report which stated

'two from the majority group on the Council and one from each of the other political groups', Isabella Freeman, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal), confirmed that the Council's Constitution would need to be amended following the appointment of two minority group Members by the Council.

Mr Eric Pemberton sought clarification regarding the granting and supervising of any exemptions from political restrictions detailed at paragraph 5 n) of the report. Isabella Freeman advised that this was a very rare requirement for Members of the Standards Board to undertake, however should the situation arise then specific training would be given.

### **RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

## **6.2 Annual Work Programme**

Isabella Freeman introduced the report proposing a work programme for the Committee during the Municipal Year 2010/11.

The Committee noted that training on the Assessments Sub-Committee would also be taking place.

### **RESOLVED**

That the proposed the work programme be agreed.

## **6.3 Corporate Complaints and Social Care Complaints Annual Report 2009/2010**

Ruth Dowden, Corporate Complaints Manager, introduced the report detailing a summary of the complaints received by the Council through the Corporate Complaints procedure during the period April 2009 to March 2010, and those received by the Local Government Ombudsman for the same period.

The Committee noted that there had been significant improvements in response times at each of the three complaint stages, and the Local Government Ombudsman had commented positively in the Annual Letter to the Council regarding the focus on local resolution and prompt responses.

Members of the Committee raised a number of questions concerning the presentation of the information provided, evidence of route cause analysis, customer satisfaction, the effectiveness of each complaint stage, vexatious complainants, publicity of the service, and the timescales for Children's Social Care Complaints.

Ruth Dowden provided the following responses:

- The production of an executive summary at the beginning of the report document itself would be considered for the future
- Monitoring of progress of complaints was undertaken on a weekly basis to track performance and enable trends to be identified. This was more for analytical purposes and services are prompted to identify route causes.
- In order to target specific groups, additional publicity was undertaken, and Social Care departments issued service users with complaints information and leaflets.
- Customer satisfaction surveys were undertaken periodically and quality control measures were in place.
- Research was undertaken to see if complaints not upheld at Stage 1 were then overturned at a later stage.
- Children's Social Care Complaints took longer to resolve as an independent investigator had to be appointed and Service Heads were allowed to put action on hold if need be.

### **RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

### **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

Isabella Freeman reported that following the Government's decision to disband The Standards Board for England, Standards Committees would still continue to undertake the same role and functions, but without any guidance or support from a governing body.

The meeting ended at 8.15 a.m.

Chair, Mr Patrick (Barry) O'Connor  
Standards Committee