

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS (ADVISORY) COMMITTEE

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2016

**ROOM MP702, 7TH FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON E14 2BG**

Members Present:

John Pulford MBE (Chair)
Nafisa Adam (Vice-Chair)
Mike Houston
Councillor Marc Francis
Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Candida Ronald
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim
Councillor Andrew Wood (Substitute for Councillor Chris Chapman)

Observers:

none —

Apologies:

Elizabeth Hall (Observer)
Daniel McLaughlin (Co-opted Member)
Councillor Sabina Akhtar (Member)
Councillor Ohid Ahmed (Member)
Councillor Chris Chapman (Member)

Officers Present:

Paul Greeno	— (Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer, Legal Services)
Antonella Burgio	— (Democratic Services)

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September 2016 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

3. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Governance Update

Paul Greeno, Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer, Legal Services presented the report which provided a periodic update on governance matters. The following matters were highlighted:

- The cross-party constitution working group would be reformed.
- A review of the Planning code of conduct would be undertaken.
- A number of committee terms of reference had been revised.
- The Health and Well Being Board was now chaired by the Cabinet Member for Health and Adults Social Care.
- A new executive sub-committee would be established to determine applications for third sector and community grants (Council 5 December 2016).
- A comprehensive member training and development programme would be developed for the new municipal year.
- There were some changes to the delegated powers of the Chief Executive and Elected Mayor.

The Committee noted the matters highlighted.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

3.2 Revised Licensing Code of Conduct Update

Paul Greeno, Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer, Legal Services introduced the report which provided the committee with details of the revised licencing code of conduct incorporating changes suggested during consultation with Licensing Committee and Standards Advisory Committee. This document would be presented for approval at Full Council on 5 December 2016.

Members noted that the revision addressed issues of probity around members of licensing sub-committees hearing licensing applications in their Ward.

RESOLVED

1. That the revisions made to the proposed revised Licensing Code of Conduct following the suggestions made by the Committee at its meeting on 22nd September 2016 be noted; and
2. That it be noted that the revised Licensing Code of Conduct is to be submitted to full Council for adoption at its meeting on 5th December 2016.

3.3 Members' Attendance, Timesheets and Declaration of Interests: Monitoring Report

The Clerk introduced the report which provided quarterly monitoring information relating to Councillor attendance at meetings, declarations of interests and activity recorded through timesheets.

Since a significant number of councillors were failing to complete timesheets and there were no statutory powers to enforce the practice, a referral from the Committee was made to the Cross Party Governance Review Working Group asking them whether timesheet keeping should be discontinued. The matter was referred to the political groups for consideration and gave the following responses:

- Independent and Conservative Groups did not wish to pursue timesheet keeping.
- Labour Group wished the practice to be maintained.

The Committee discussed the response noting that:

- Timesheets provided a mechanism through which Councillors could demonstrate how they were serving their constituents
- There were other data available to demonstrate this such as members' enquiries, attendance at meetings and training statistics.
- Keeping timesheets was an onerous task notwithstanding that they could now be completed on line
- A Group had instructed its councillors not to complete timesheets since Governance Review Working Group had not recommended that they should be maintained.

The Committee considered the arguments put forward and the Chair determined that since there had be no change to the Council's policy on member timesheets, the Committee should continue to monitor them.

Noting that during the discussion it had been brought to light that there were other methods and proprietary software which could be used to alleviate the burden of completing timesheets, the Chair also asked that a referral be made to explore feasibility and procurement of software / an App that had capacity to deliver an element of automated time recording of Member activity.

RESOLVED

1. That the information set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 in relation to Councillors' submission of timesheets, attendance at formal meetings and training events, and completion of the register of interests during the previous and current municipal years be noted
2. That the updated position from the Governance Review Working Group with regards to the requirement for Councillors to submit monthly timesheets be noted and that the ongoing requirement for Members' to submit monthly timesheets be maintained.

3. That there was no need to ask the Chair to write to any Councillor(s) in connection with any of the monitoring information
4. Since there were other methods and proprietary software which could be used to facilitate time recording for Members, that a referral be made to explore feasibility and procurement of software / an App that had capacity to deliver an element of automated time recording of Member activity.
5. That the recommended updates to the reporting items on the timesheet as set out in Appendix 4 be noted.
6. That Standards Advisory Committee continue to receive further monitoring reports at six monthly intervals.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 7.49 p.m.

Chair, John Pulford MBE
Standards (Advisory) Committee