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| Non-Executive Report of the: Standards (Advisory) Committee 29th June 2017 |  |
| Report of: Graham White, Interim Corporate Director, Governance and Interim Monitoring Officer | Classification: Unrestricted |
| Members' Attendance, Timesheets and Declaration of Interests: Monitoring Report | |

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| Originating Officer(s) | Beverley McKenzie |
| Wards affected | (All Wards); |

Summary

This report updates the Committee on a range of matters related to Councillors' attendance at formal meetings and training events, completion of timesheets and the register of interests.

Recommendations:

The Standards (Advisory) Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the information set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 in relation to Councillors' submission of timesheets, completion of the register of interests and attendance at training events, and during the previous and current municipal years and attendance at formal meetings
2. Note the updated position for the automatic publication of the attendance of Members at meetings.
3. Consider whether there is a need to ask the Chair to write to any Councillor(s) in connection with any of the monitoring information;
4. Confirm the request of the SAC to receive further specific monitoring reports on attendance, timesheets and declarations of interest at six monthly intervals.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The former Standards Committee received regular monitoring reports on the completion of the Members' timesheet and attendance by Members at Council and other formal meetings. This was considered good practice and the most suitable way to enhance transparency and accountability of the elected Members.
- 1.2 In March 2016, the Governance Review Working Group decided to no longer require the submission of timesheets, and each political group were responsible to implement this. Some political groups opted to continue to submit the timesheets as this enabled accountability and increased

transparency. Officers have therefore continued to publish the details of all timesheets received on the Council website.

- 1.3 The Member timesheet is a simple worksheet on which Members record an amount of time spent in Council meetings or other activities. The timesheet does not provided a detailed time recording, nor does it provide sufficient detail to audit the Members' activities. Please refer to the sample in Appendix 4.
- 1.4 At the request of the SAC, consideration has been given to alternatives for the Members capture of time. However, as the 'timesheet' is more of an overview of activities and overall time spent on an activity in the given month, rather than a specific cost accounting of all time spent, further changes and implementation of apps to support this, would complicate the reporting and impact on the ease of reporting for the Members.
- 1.5 Officers are discussing with the Committee Software provider the possibility of automatically populating meeting attendance to the timesheet. There are technical restrictions on automatically populating this information to the timesheet form; however, the Councillors meeting attendance is now automatically populated and presented on the individual Councillor webpages. Please refer to the sample in Appendix 5.
- 1.6 There is no statutory requirement for Members to report on their democratic activities nor does the submission of timesheets affect the Basic or Special Responsibility Allowances paid to Members.
- 1.7 It is recognised that the Members are held directly accountable for their time spent, through the democratic processes.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Standards Advisory Committee may wish to consider the merits of the ongoing monitoring of the timesheet submission, Declaration of interests and attendance at training and committee meetings.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

Timesheets – Current Position

- 3.1 In relation to the submission of timesheets the current position, as at 15th June 2017 and set out in Appendix 1 attached, is that 3 Members (6.67% of the total) have completed their timesheets up to and including May 2017. Thirty-three Councillors (73.33%) are more than three months in arrears. An updated schedule will be tabled at the meeting, if necessary.

Members' Declaration of Interests and Attendance at Training Events

- 3.2 Members are required to complete a register of their interests within 28 days of becoming a Councillor and subsequently they must notify any change to this within 28 days of becoming aware of the change. The attached schedule lists the date of each Councillor's latest update to their register entry.
- 3.3 As a matter of good practice and for the purpose of clarity, Members are asked to provide a nil return if there are no changes to register at the six-monthly reminder. However failure to do so would not represent a breach of the Code of Conduct. The next reminder exercise will be undertaken in October 2017.
- 3.4 The Committee has also sought assurance regarding Councillors' attendance at relevant mandatory training events such as those on the Code of Conduct and the specific sessions arranged for members of the Development, Licensing and Appeals Committees and the Appointments Sub-Committee. This information is now incorporated into the schedule at Appendix 2, together with the total number of attendances at other (non-mandatory) in-house Member seminars during the year to date.

Members Attendance at Committee Meetings

- 3.5 As with timesheets, attendance at committee/panel meetings is not a statutory requirement - the law simply says that if a Councillor fails to attend any Council or other qualifying meeting for a period of six months, he/she shall cease to be a Member of the local authority - and it is accepted that many important Council duties take place outside formal meetings. Nevertheless, attendance at meetings to which he/she has been appointed does represent a key part of a Councillor's work and the combination of attendance and timesheet monitoring information in this report provides a useful picture of a Councillor's activity for the purpose of accountability.

The current position - attendance at meetings

- 3.6 The record of attendance by Councillors at formal constitutional meetings from 1st November 2016 to 15th June 2017 is attached in Appendix 3. Where a Councillor has failed to attend a formal meeting but has submitted apologies in advance, this is noted in the report.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 This report provides an update to the Committee on a range of matters related to Councillors' attendance at formal meetings and training events, completion of timesheets and the register of interests. This is considered good practice and enhances transparency and accountability of the elected Members.
- 4.2 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced new arrangements to govern the Standards of Conduct for local authority members and co-optees. Seven guiding principles of conduct are set out:- selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty and leadership.
- 5.2 The information in this report supports these guiding principles and, in particular, enhances performance and openness in relation to members' performance of their Council duties.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific implications for One Tower Hamlets arising from the proposals in this report.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Committee meeting software provides an automated return on the Members attendance at meetings. This is published to the Members webpage and enables accountability to the electorate.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 There are no SAGE implications arising directly from this report.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 This report has no immediate implications for Crime and Disorder.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Members' Timesheet Monitoring report
- Appendix 2 –Members' DOI and Training attendance report
- Appendix 3 - Members' Committee Attendance Monitoring report
- Appendix 4 – Sample Timesheet for completion
- Appendix 5 – Sample website report on Meeting attendance

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- None

Officer contact details for documents:

- Beverley McKenzie, Head, Members Support 020 7364 4872