

<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p><b>Standards (Advisory) Committee</b></p> <p>14 March 2018</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Use of Council Resources - Party Political Literature</b></p>	

<p><b>Originating Officer(s)</b></p>	<p>Mark Norman, Legal Adviser &amp; Deputy Monitoring Officer</p>
<p><b>Wards affected</b></p>	<p>All Wards</p>

### Summary

This report informs members of the Advisory Committee of the action taken by the Monitoring Officer in relation to the use of Council resources and party political literature.

### Recommendations:

The Standards (Advisory) Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider and note the content of this report.

**1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

1.1 Not applicable this is a noting report.

**2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

2.1 Not applicable this is a noting report.

**3. DETAILS OF REPORT**

3.1 In January this year concerns were raised with the Monitoring Officer about the use of Council email addresses and Council contact telephone numbers in party political literature. Concerns were expressed both in relation to leaflets being circulated promoting prospective candidates for the Mayoral and Local elections which will take place on 3 May 2018 and in relation to historical party political leaflets designed to affect support for a particular political party.

3.2 This is a matter which affects all political parties and in response the Monitoring Officer contacted individual Members advising them to withdraw leaflets from circulation or to amend the contact details. In addition, the Monitoring Officer sent a letter to all political Group Leaders and party whips reminding them that Member email and telephone facilities supplied by the Council are resources of the authority and must be apolitical. In her letter the Monitoring Officer also advised that if any party continued to circulate political publications containing Council email addresses and Council contact telephone numbers, she would report the matter to the Standards (Advisory) Committee as a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct.

3.3 The Monitoring Officer determined that this would be sufficient action and sought compliance by 9 February 2018.

3.4 The Monitoring Officer has also contacted the Metropolitan Police and has shared relevant information for them to consider and if appropriate investigate.

**4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

**5. LEGAL COMMENTS**

5.1 Paragraph 2.7 of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members provides that members should act to ensure Council resources are used prudently. When using or authorising the use by others of Council resources, members must ensure that they are used only for legitimate Council purposes and not for any other purpose. In particular they must not be used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes).

## **6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no specific anti poverty or equal opportunity implications arising out of this report.

## **7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Email and telephone facilities for Members form part of the wider fabric maintained at Council cost in order to ensure the proper discharge of Council functions. Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 requires the Council to achieve best value in the discharge of its functions. It would be contrary to this duty to permit the use of Council resources for party political purposes.

## **8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT (SAGE)**

- 8.1 There are no implications for the Council's SAGE strategy arising out of this report.

## **9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The action taken by the Monitoring Officer as outlined in this report was designed to ensure compliance with the Code of Conduct for Members, ensure political impartiality, limit potential reputational damage to the Council and maintain confidence in local democracy.

## **10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no immediate crime and disorder implications arising out of this report.

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### **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

#### **Linked Report**

- NONE

#### **Appendices**

- NONE

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

#### **List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report**

- NONE

#### **Officer contact details for documents:**

- N/A