

Committee Standards Advisory Committee	Date 14 January 2014	Classification UNRESTRICTED	Agenda Item No.
Report of Service Head, Democratic Services	Title Review of Member Timesheets		
Originating Officer(s): John Williams	Wards affected ALL		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 In October 2013 the Standards Advisory Committee received the regular monitoring report on Councillors' attendance at formal meetings and training events, completion of timesheets and the register of interests.
- 1.2. In relation to Members' timesheets, some Members expressed the view that the form used was too complex and in some respects out of date, and this may have contributed to a low completion rate in some cases. The Committee asked that the timesheets be reviewed and a proposal on streamlining the form be brought to this meeting.
- 1.3 This report therefore sets out some proposed changes to the content of the timesheets. The Committee is invited to comment on these and to suggest any further improvements they feel are necessary. The political groups and independent Councillors have also been consulted on this matter and any comments received will be circulated to the meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee consider and comment on the proposed amendments to the Members' Timesheet proforma as attached at Appendix 'B' and any further suggestions received in response to consultation and/or raised at the meeting.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Since April 2004 the former Standards Committee and now the Standards Advisory Committee have received regular monitoring reports on the completion of Members' timesheets and attendance by Members at Council and other formal meetings.
- 3.2 At the meeting in October 2013, the Standards Advisory Committee noted that a significant number of Members had failed to submit their timesheets in a timely manner as required. The Committee discussed the appropriate response to this breach and agreed that the Chair would write to the Members concerned with a copy to the respective Group Leader(s).
- 3.3 During discussion however, some Members reported that the timesheet proforma used was somewhat complex and in certain respects out of date. It was suggested

that this may have contributed to the low completion rate in some cases. Councillors present enquired whether:

- § the process could be simplified;
- § a type of electronic input could be devised; and/or
- § some irrelevant categories of activity listed in the timesheets could be removed

3.4 The Service Head Democratic Services reported that in the medium term a self-service electronic form would be introduced enabling Members to input their details directly in a more user-friendly way. In the meantime however he undertook to review the proforma and bring any proposed amendments to the Committee's next meeting.

4. MEMBERS' TIMESHEETS

4.1 Tower Hamlets Councillors have, since April 2002, completed monthly timesheets detailing the time spent on council duties, split into categories such as surgeries, casework, attendance at meetings/external bodies etc.

4.2 Members' timesheets are posted on the 'Meet your Councillor' pages of the Council's website which also contain information on the ward represented, committee/external appointments, surgery arrangements, contact and other details. Councillors are personally responsible for the accuracy and timely submission of their timesheets.

4.3 Completion of timesheets is not a statutory requirement and does not affect the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances paid to Members. However, the London Councils Independent Panel on the Remuneration of Councillors have emphasised the need for an accountable and transparent allowances scheme. In their 2001 report, the Independent Panel identified the tasks and responsibilities which they believed were the essential remit of a Councillor. In proposing a Basic Allowance to apply to all Councillors, they assumed a contribution of 40 hours per month on top of a "voluntary commitment" of 20 hours for each Member. Tower Hamlets has voluntarily developed the timesheet system to enhance transparency.

4.4 The timesheet proforma currently used by Members is attached at Appendix 'A'.

4.5 A number of amendments to the proforma are proposed at Appendix 'B'. In the main these represent the deletion of obsolete categories and updating of terms etc. The Committee is invited to identify any further changes to the proforma that they consider desirable. The political groups and independent Councillors have also been consulted on this matter and any comments received will be reported to the committee.

5. OBSERVATIONS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 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.

6.2 The system of Member timesheets in use at Tower Hamlets supports these guiding principles and, in particular, enhances accountability and openness in relation to members performance of their council duties.

7. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERTIONS

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

8. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This report has no immediate implications for Crime and Disorder reduction.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no risk management implications.

10. STRATEGIC ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT (SAGE)

10.1 There are no SAGE implications arising directly from this report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)

LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Brief description of "background paper"

Name and telephone number
of holder and address where
open to inspection

Reports by the Independent Panel on the
Remuneration of Councillors in London

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Councillors timesheets and attendance files