

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT 5.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 18 APRIL 2023**

**COMMITTEE ROOM - TOWER HAMLETS TOWN HALL, 160 WHITECHAPEL  
ROAD, LONDON E1 1BJ**

**Members Present in Person:**

Councillor Shafi Ahmed  
Councillor Sabina Akhtar  
Councillor Sirajul Islam  
Councillor Abu Chowdhury

**Co-optees Present in Person:**

John Pulford MBE  
Fiona Browne Vice Chair  
Mike Houston

**Apologies:**

Councillor Amin Rahman

**Others In Attendance Virtually:**

Amanda Orchard (Independent Person)  
Rachael Tiffen Independent Person

**Officers Present in Person:**

Agnes Adrien (Head of Litigation, Legal Services)  
Patricia Attawia (Democratic Services Team Leader, Civic &  
Members, Governance)  
Jill Bayley (Head of Legal Safeguarding)  
Janet Fasan (Director of Legal & Monitoring Officer)  
Matthew Mannion (Head of Democratic Services)  
Joel West (Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee))

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2023 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

### **3. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

#### **3.1 Standards Advisory Committee Annual Report to Council**

Jill Bayley, Head of Safeguarding, introduced the report that set out the Committee's annual report to Council. The report covers the activities of the Committee over the last year as well as being an opportunity to highlight any relevant issues to Council.

The Advisory Committee welcomed the report. The Chair suggested several minor amendments including:

- Inclusion of former co-optee Saied Uddin.
- Updating complaints information.
- Various minor format and style amendments, to be notified to officers separately.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The activities of the Standards Advisory Committee for the municipal year May 2022 – May 2023 as set out in the Annual Report of the Standards Advisory Committee attached as Appendix 1 to the report submitted, be agreed for presentation to Council, subject to minor amendments as detailed above.

#### **3.2 Register of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality Quarterly Update**

Patricia Attawia, Democratic Services Team Leader (Civic and Member Support) introduced the report that updated the Committee on the Members' Register of Interests and declarations of gifts and hospitality submitted by Members since the previous report to the committee on 15 February 2023.

The Advisory Committee noted and welcomed that Democratic Services officers are thorough in prompting and chasing members to complete gifts and hospitality submissions, including issuing regular reminders in the members bulletin. The Chair indicated he would welcome readership stats of the bulletin once available.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The report be noted.

#### **3.3 Code of Conduct for Members - Complaint Monitoring**

Jill Bayley, Head of Safeguarding introduced the report that updated the Advisory Committee on the quarterly monitoring information for complaints and investigations relating to alleged breaches Council's Code of Conduct for

Members. Jill explained that the Council has chased the external agency for one of the complaints, but no response had yet been received. She was in communication with the Independent Persons (IPs) regarding the outstanding complaints.

The Committee sought clarification of the reason why one of the complaints was not being progressed pending receipt of an online form. Jill and Janet Fasan, Director Legal and Monitoring Officer explained that a completed complaints form had been deemed necessary to ensure sufficient relevant information and to allow members who were subject of the complaint to effectively respond to any accusations. Exceptions could and had been made to this requirement where a need had been demonstrated (e.g. for complaints with a relevant disability) but this was not the case for this complainant.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The report and the information contained in Appendix 1 to the report is noted.

### **3.4 Code of Conduct for Members - Annual Review**

Janet Fasan introduced the report invited the Committee to review and identify any changes they considered should be made to the current LBTH Code of Conduct for Members.

The Advisory Committee noted there were some minor amendments to be made to style and formatting and to remove repetitious sections of the code.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The Code of Conduct for Members as set out in Appendix 1 is noted, subject to the minor amendments referred to above.
2. Authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer, following consultation with the Chair of the Advisory Committee, to make changes to the Code prior to submission to Council.

### **3.5 Update on review of Member Officer Protocol**

Agnes Adrien, Head of Litigation, introduced the report that summarised and reflected the review of the Member /Officer Protocol by the Deputy Monitoring Officer and Chair and the Vice Chair of the Standards Committee and sought the views of the Advisory Committee on the draft updated protocol.

The Chair noted and agreed the reasons for urgency as set out in the report.

The Advisory Committee made the following suggestions for amendments:

1. Strengthen the section detailing roles and responsibilities of political assistants to clarify behaviour that would be deemed unacceptable (for example, demonstrating political preference at a public meeting).

2. Formatting and style changes, to be notified to officers separately.
3. Adding a reference to the Code of Conduct for Members under paragraph 6.4 (reference to guidance on predetermination)
4. Addition of reference to possible complaints for improper use of Council Facilities (paragraph 8.4)
5. Deletion of the word 'severally' from paragraph 10.17, which the Advisory Committee felt to be superfluous.
6. Deletion of the phrase 'It is self-evident that' from paragraph 3.17, which the Advisory Committee felt to be superfluous.
7. Amending paragraphs 11.1 and 11.2 to ensure consistent wording on private/informal discussion/resolution.

The Advisory Committee also asked that the general tone of the Protocol be reviewed to improve readability/accessibility, remove repetitions and employ a language style consistent with the Code of Conduct for Members, which members felt was more friendly in tone.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The draft updated Member /Officer Protocol be noted, subject to the recommended amendments above.
2. The Advisory Committee will receive further updates on the draft Member /Officer Protocol at a meeting in the next municipal year.

**4. WORK PLAN**

The Advisory Committee noted the final submission of the 22/23 work plan and noted that some items would be carried forward into 23/24.

Further to a query from Advisory Committee members, Officers advised that recruitment for the currently vacant co-optee position had not yet commenced, but it was hoped to start this shortly. Janet Fasan urged members of the Advisory Committee to promote and publicise the opportunity to their networks to maximise interest in the role, which had sometimes been disappointing in the past.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the work plan be noted.

**5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was none.

**6. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

A resolution to exclude the press and public was not required.

**7. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR  
CONSIDERS URGENT**

None.

The meeting ended at 6.10 p.m.

Chair,  
Standards Advisory Committee