



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held at 6.30pm on Monday 12 March 2012, Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP

Present: Councillors Ian Adams, Danny Chalkley, Louise Hyams, Ruth Bush and Tim Mitchell

Independent Member present: The Very Reverend Dr John Hall (Chairman), Lord Dennis Stevenson

Apologies: Councillors Michael Brahams, Alastair Moss and Guthrie McKie.
Independent Members: Lord Richard Best and Mrs Liz Peace

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 There were no Declarations of Interest.

2. MINUTES

2.1 **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2011 be approved.

3. LOCALISM ACT: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARDS ARRANGEMENTS (see report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services)

3.1 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report. He advised that the report had been submitted in order to update the Committee following the implementation of the Localism Act. Appendix 1 of the report sought the Committee's views on a number of issues following which a report would be submitted to a special meeting. It was noted that the LGA were expected to issue two suggested versions of a Code of consideration. It would be a matter for the Council to determine on the recommendation of the Standards Committee if it wished to accept either of these or determine its own Code.

3.2 The Committee having expressed the following views:

1. Are there any specific aspects of the existing Members' Code of Conduct which, in the Committee's view, should be changed?

Generally, the Committee felt that the current Code had worked well. It noted that the LGA were likely to circulate two draft Codes for consideration and that these would be reported to the Standards Committee at a special meeting.

2. What are the Committee's views on the subject of adopting the LGA's model of conduct, in principle?

See 1 above.

3. Should a Member, upon disclosure of a pecuniary interest at a meeting of the authority, be required to leave the room during the debate and the vote on that subject?

What matters should be disclosed in the Register of Members Interests (report para 5.6).

It was felt that a Member disclosing a pecuniary interest should be required to leave the room and not vote on the matter in question.

4. The Committee's views are sought on what should be included in any dispensations protocol, in light of the provisions in the Act?

The Committee agreed a dispensations protocol on the subject of Majority Party membership in March 2011, as a result of which a special dispensation is no longer necessary providing the Members in question can make the required declaration. This has worked effectively to date and it is therefore proposed that this aspect be retained in any wider protocol.

The Committee considered that the existing arrangements for dispensation were satisfactory and endorsed the comments set out above.

5. The Committee's views are sought on the suggested simplified process for dealing with allegations of breach.

It is necessary/desirable to incorporate an appeal process?

The Committee supported the simplified process outlined in the report and that an appeal process should be included.

6. Is one independent person sufficient to fulfil the duties required of a simplified allegations process?

Would it be advantageous for the City Council to share an independent person with its Tri-borough partners and place a joint advertisement with the tri-borough partners to recruit the new independent person accordingly?

It was suggested that at least two and possibly three Independent Members should be appointed.

7. The Committee's views are sought on the number of Members required to sit on the new Standards Committee.

The Committee noted that the Standards Committee should have sufficient Members to allow for an appeal to be heard by a completely new set of Members.

8. The Committee's views are sought on the suggested location for the current Standards Committee functions, as specified in paragraph 8.3 of the report.

Other options available for the delegation of functions, should the Committee deem appropriate, are:

The Monitoring Officer
The Governance Working Group
The Audit and Performance Committee

The location of functions suggested was endorsed.

9. Should this report continue to be submitted to the Standards Committee on an annual basis?

The Annual Report should in respect of Member Conduct matters be referred to the Standards Committee and in respect of other matters to the Audit and Performance Committee.

- Resolved:** (i) That the comments of the Committee set out above be noted.
(ii) That a special meeting of the Committee be held on Tuesday 24 April 2012 to consider the recommendation of a Members Code of Conduct to the Council.

7. CLOSE OF MEETING

- 7.1 The meeting ended at 7.17pm.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____