



City of Westminster

# Committee Agenda

Title: **Standards Committee**

Meeting Date: **Thursday 1st July, 2021**

Time: **7.00 pm**

Venue: **This will be a Virtual Meeting**

Members: **Councillors:**

Judith Warner (Chairman)  
David Boothroyd  
Ian Adams  
Richard Beddoe  
Louise Hyams  
Patricia McAllister

This will be a virtual meeting. Members of the public and press are welcome to follow the meeting and listen to the discussion on Part 1 of the Agenda.

This meeting will be livestreamed and recorded. A link to the livestream will be available on the meeting webpage.

**If you require any further information, please contact the Committee Officer, Tristan Fieldsend, Senior Committee and Councillor Co-ordinator.**

**Email:** [tfieldsend@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:tfieldsend@westminster.gov.uk); **Tel:** 07812 760 335  
**Corporate Website:** [www.westminster.gov.uk](http://www.westminster.gov.uk)

**Note for Members:** Members are reminded that Officer contacts are shown at the end of each report and Members are welcome to raise questions in advance of the meeting. With regard to item 2, guidance on declarations of interests is included in the Code of Governance; if Members and Officers have any particular questions they should contact the the Director of Law in advance of the meeting please.

## **AGENDA**

### **PART 1 (IN PUBLIC)**

#### **1. MEMBERSHIP**

To note any changes to the membership.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive declarations by Members and Officers of the existence and nature of any pecuniary interests or any other significant interest in matters on this agenda.

#### **3. MINUTES**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2021 as a correct record of proceedings.

**(Pages 3 - 6)**

#### **4. UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING FOR MEMBERS**

**(Pages 7 - 14)**

#### **5. WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

**(Pages 15 - 20)**

**Stuart Love**  
**Chief Executive**  
**23 June 2021**



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

## MINUTES

### Standards Committee

#### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on Thursday 8 April 2021

**Members Present:** Councillors Judith Warner (Chairman), David Boothroyd, Ian Adams, Louise Hyams and Patricia McAllister

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Richard Beddoe, Tasnim Shawkat (Monitoring Officer) and Shajad Hussain (Independent Person)

**Also Present:** Asif Iqbal and Elizabeth Walters (Independent Persons)

#### 1 MEMBERSHIP

1.1 It was noted that there were no changes to the membership.

#### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were none.

#### 3 MINUTES

3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2020 be signed by the chairman as a correct record of the proceedings.

#### 4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

4.1 Hazel Best, Principal Solicitor, introduced the item and updated the committee on the outcome of the LGA consultation on the Model Code of Conduct. She advised that the LGA published the Model Code of Conduct with a recommendation for adoption for all local authorities on the 3 December 2020.

4.2 A comparison between the LGA Model Code of Conduct and the council's existing Code of Conduct for Members was set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

- 4.3 The committee was asked to review the LGA Model Code of Conduct and consider if any changes should be made to the council's existing Code of Conduct for Members.
- 4.4 Hazel Best advised members that Monitoring Officers had through Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) asked the LGA for clarification on some issues which were set out in the report. She further advised that of a survey of 82 Monitoring Officers, 20% were intending to adopt the model code, 20% were not intending to do so, 55% would adopt it in part and the remainder were looking at making their own code. She commented that the Model Code of Conduct is a template and it would be difficult to provide a code that is suitable for all local authorities.
- 4.5 The committee noted that as the LGA had received representations from lawyers working in local authorities on aspects of the model code and that some of the recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) were still being considered by the government and would require primary legislation the Model Code of Conduct could be subject to further revision.
- 4.6 Members then discussed the differences between the Model Code of Conduct and the council's existing Code of Conduct for Members and expressed the following views:

- Style, format and language - the committee noted that the Model Code is written in the first person to encourage much more ownership by individual councillors. The chairman suggested that the emphasis on individual responsibility could be covered in training for members on the code. Elizabeth Walters, Independent Person, commented that the use of the first person could help reinforce the obligations for councillors.

The model code includes a definition under each obligation to help explain the reasons for the obligation and how it should be followed. Members thought the level of detail was helpful in providing substance to the conduct expected of councillors. The committee favoured following a similar approach in the Members Code of Conduct where definitions are currently contained at the end of the document. However, the committee noted that the Model Code is quite lengthy and it is keen to find a balance in the Members Code of Conduct so that it remains easy to digest;

- Reference to Co-opted Members - that the council's code does not include reference to co-opted members which is included in the Model Code and that this should be incorporated;
- Electronic and Social Media Communication – members noted that the new Model Code specifically applies to electronic and social media communication. The council approved a social media guidance for members in June 2019. Councillors concluded that it is preferable not to incorporate the guidance within the Code of Conduct for Members to avoid the document becoming overly long and to having to revise the code each time the guidance needs updating to reflect changes in modern

communications. However, the committee agreed that reference to the policy should be incorporated in the Members Code of Conduct and that a failure to follow the policy would be deemed a breach of the code;

- Confidentiality and access to information - the committee noted that the obligation in the Model Code of Conduct is that a councillor should not disclose information other than in specific circumstances. One of these is unless acting in the public interest. Elizabeth Walters commented that the perception of what is in the public interest is very much subjective and that the requirement to consult the Monitoring Officer prior to release is a limited obligation. She suggested that if this is to be included in the Members Code of Conduct the obligations should be more clearly defined;
- Complying with the code - the Model Code of Conduct includes an obligation on a councillor to undertake training on it provided by the local authority. Although the council provides annual training on the code of conduct this is not included as an obligation in the Members Code of Conduct. The committee supported including this as an obligation.
- Gifts and hospitality – Members broadly supported retaining the threshold of £25 for registering gifts and hospitality in the Members Code of Conduct compared to the minimum estimated value of £50 as per the Model Code of Conduct. The committee considered that it would set a poor example particularly in the current climate to increase the financial threshold of what is disclosable.

4.9 The committee's comments and those of the council's Independent Persons will be considered by officers who will include a report on revising the Members Code of Conduct on the agenda for the next committee meeting.

## **5. WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22 AND ACTION TRACKER**

### **5.1 RESOLVED:**

1. That the work programme set out in Appendix 2 of the report be agreed subject to an additional item being added on the proposed induction programme for councillors following the 2022 local elections.
2. That the responses to actions included in the action tracker set out in Appendix 3 to be report be noted.

The Meeting ended at 7.19 pm

**CHAIRMAN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_





## City of Westminster Committee Report

<b>Meeting:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Date:</b>	1 July 2021
<b>Classification:</b>	For General Release
<b>Title:</b>	Update on Code of Conduct Training for Members
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Report Author and Contact Details:</b>	Committee and Councillor Support Manager Contact Details: Janis Best, <a href="mailto:jbest@westminster.gov.uk">jbest@westminster.gov.uk</a> 07971 920521

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Standards Committee has, as part of its terms of reference, the role of advising, training or arranging to train Members and Co-opted Members on matters relating to the City Council's Code of Conduct for Members.
- 1.2 This report is to note the attendance of Members at the various Code of Conduct sessions which have been delivered since October 2018.
- 1.3 The report also provides, as an appendix, a list of all training provided by Members across wider topics which support Members to carry out their roles and functions.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked for feedback on how attendance at Code of Conduct sessions could be improved considering the figures provided in section 4.
- 2.2 As the wider programme does not come under the Committee's remit, information on this is provided only as a comparison of attendance at other sessions, to aid discussion.

### 3. Background Information

- 3.1 Code of Conduct training is delivered as part of the wider Member Development Programme, which in its current format, has been in place since the May 2018 elections, and sits under the Leader's portfolio. It consists of monthly sessions for Members which cover practical, skills based and policy topics.
- 3.2 Sessions are advertised in advance via emails to Members and also in the weekly Members' Bulletin, which also contains information on external training which Members can access.

### 4. Attendance

- 4.1 The last information provided to the Committee was in March 2020 and included figures for attendance at sessions in 2018 and 2019.
- 4.2 The table below indicates attendance at the Code of Conduct, or ethical governance related topics.

Session	Date	Attendance
Code of Conduct (1)	30 October 2019	39
Code of Conduct (2)	18 November 2019	7
Diversity training (as part of Code of Conduct) *	29 October 2020	27
Code of Conduct *	3 June 2021	27

\* indicates online session

- 4.3 As can be seen from the table the attendance at the most recent Code of Conduct refresh session fell below the attendance in 2019. In general, attendance since sessions were moved online in March 2020 has increased by 8%, but this is not the case for the Code of Conduct sessions.
- 4.4 This decline in attendance could be down to several reasons; the sessions not being prioritised in diaries; sessions not being advertised in the places that Members would see them or Members not aware that it is recommended that a refresher session should be attended on an annual basis.

### 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications

### 6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.



**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the  
Background Papers please contact:**

*Janis Best, Committee and Councillor Support Manager, [jb@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:jb@westminster.gov.uk);  
07971 920521*

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

*Appendices - Sessions and attendance from October 2018 – June 2021*

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## Appendix A

### Sessions and attendance from October 2018 – June 2021

\* indicates online session

Session	Date	Attendance
Personal Safety	4 October 2018	11
Housing	29 November 2018	8
CityWest Homes Local Offer	10 January 2019	14
Safeguarding Children	13 February 2019	5
Emergency Planning	11 April 2019	10
Corporate Parenting	6 June 2019	4
Cyber Security and GDPR	5 September 2019	7
Code of Conduct (1)	30 October 2019	39
Code of Conduct (2)	18 November 2019	7
Personal Safety	16 January 2020	8
Teams training*	21 April 2020	22
Teams training (basic)*	28 April 2020	15
Teams training (ask the expert)*	5 May 2020	14
Teams Live events(1)*	2 June 2020	14
Teams Live events (2)*	10 June 2020	13
Cyber Security*	17 September 2020	10
Violence Against Women and Girls*	1 October 2020	10
Document Handling for Virtual meetings*	15 October 2020	19
Diversity training (as part of Code of Conduct)*	29 October 2020	27
Office 365 functions (basic)*	12 November 2020	16
Teams (basic)*	26 November 2020	8
Preventing Youth Crime and Serious Violence*	10 December 2020	16
Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting*	14 January 2021	14
GDPR*	11 February 2021	17
CIL (1)*	23 February 2021	9
CIL (2)*	25 February 2021	8
CIL (3)*	4 March 2021	8
Teams and Office365*	25 March 2021	7
Cyber Security*	29 April 2021	9
Code of Conduct refresh*	3 June 2021	27

## Appendix B

### Analysis of attendance 2019 -2020 and 2020 – 2021

Average attendance per session – 2019-2020	12.5
Average attendance per session – 2020-2021	13.7
	<b>8% increase</b>

## Appendix C

### Session timetable for 2021-2022

Date	Topic
Thursday 23 September	Westminster's City Plan 2019-2040
Thursday 14 October	GDPR
Thursday 18 November	
Thursday 13 January 2022	Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting
Thursday 10 February	
Thursday 24 March	
Thursday 21 April	

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City of Westminster

## Standards Committee

<b>Date:</b>	<b>1 July 2021</b>
<b>Classification:</b>	<b>For General Release</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Work Programme 2021-2022</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Tasnim Shawkat, Monitoring Officer</b>
<b>Financial Summary:</b>	<b>There are no financial implications arising from this report</b>
<b>Report Author and Contact Details:</b>	<b>Tristan Fieldsend, Senior Committee and Councillor Co-ordinator</b> <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:tfieldsend@westminster.gov.uk">tfieldsend@westminster.gov.uk</a>

### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 Members are asked to review the proposed work programme for 2021-2022 set out as appendix 2 to the report and identify any other items it wishes to include to it.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That, having regard to the Committee's Terms of Reference attached as appendix 1 of this report the Committee indicate any further items it wishes to be added to its future Work Programme.

### **3. Background Information**

- 3.1 The production of a work programme is to enable the Committee to review and update its forthcoming work plan at each of its meetings.
- 3.2 In order to ensure the Committee undertakes its work programme, at the request of the Chairman, 3 meetings per annum have been programmed.

### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications.

### **5. Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

**If you have any questions about this report, or wish to inspect one of the background papers, please contact:**  
**Tristan Fieldsend, Senior Committee and Councillor Co-ordinator**  
**[tfieldsend@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:tfieldsend@westminster.gov.uk)**

Background Papers: None.



## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **CONSTITUTION**

6 Members of the Council, 4 Majority Party Members and 2 Minority Party Member.

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- (1) To promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the Members and Co-opted Members of the City Council.
- (2) To advise the City Council on the adoption or revision of a Code of Conduct for Members.
- (3) Advising, training or arranging to train Members and Co-opted Members on matters relating to the City Council's Code of Conduct for Members.
- (4) To assist Members and Co-opted Members observe the City Council's Code of Conduct for Members.
- (5) To monitor the operation of Code of Conduct for Members.
- (6) Consider reports referred to the Committee by ethical standards officers or the Monitoring Officer of investigations into alleged breaches of the City Council's Code of Conduct for Members.
- (7) Where necessary, to conduct hearings into allegations of breaches of the said code, and interview officers, Members and others as required.
- (8) Determining whether allegations of breaches of the said code are made out and determining what action, if any, to take in relation hereto including, where it is determined that a breach has occurred, deciding what sanctions, if any, should be applied in relation to the Member or Member concerned (and for the avoidance of doubt, the Committee shall only have power to impose any sanction authorised by law).
- (9) Consider any complaints in respect of Members referred to the Committee under the City Council's "Whistleblowing" procedure and determining the action to be taken, if any.
- (10) To the extent allowed by the Law, granting dispensations in relation to Member and co-opted Member interests as referred to in the Members Code of Conduct.
- (11) To consider, advise and, if appropriate, take action upon other Member conduct issues not otherwise dealt with under these terms of reference.

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# Work Programme 2021/22

## Standards Committee

1 July 2021		
<b>Update on Code of Conduct Training for Members</b>	To receive an update on the attendance of Members at the various Code of Conduct sessions which have been delivered since October 2018	Janis Best
4 November 2021		
<b>Annual Q&amp;A with the Leader of the council on Ethical Standards</b>	To submit questions to the Leader of the Council on Ethical standards in relation to Members	-
<b>Changes to the Council's Members Model Code of Conduct</b>	To receive a report setting out possible changes to the Council's Member Code of Conduct in response to the review of the model Code of Conduct by the LGA	Tasnim Shawkat
<b>Annual Update on Member Complaints</b>	To receive a report on complaints against members	Tasnim Shawkat
7 April 2022		
<b>Bi-annual Standards Committee Report</b>	To consider a report on the work of the committee since March 2020.	Tristan Fieldsend

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