



City of Westminster

Committee Agenda

Title: **Standards Committee**

Meeting Date: **Wednesday 29th November, 2023**

Time: **6.30 pm**

Venue: **Rooms 18.01, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP**

Members: **Councillors:**
Ruth Bush (Chair)
Md Shamsed Chowdhury
Sara Hassan
Louise Hyams
Tim Mitchell



Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussion Part 1 of the Agenda

Admission to the public gallery is by ticket, issued from the ground floor reception from 6.00pm. If you have a disability and require any special assistance please contact the Committee Officer (details listed below) in advance of the meeting.

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

**Email: tfieldsend@westminster.gov.uk; Tel: 07812 760 335
Corporate Website: 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 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 13 July 2023 as a correct record of proceedings.

(Pages 3 - 6)

4. ANNUAL Q&A WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON ETHICAL STANDARDS

5. ANNUAL UPDATE ON MEMBER COMPLAINTS

Report of the Director of Law

(Pages 7 - 10)

6. WORK PROGRAMME

(Pages 11 - 16)

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

**Stuart Love
Chief Executive
21 November 2023**



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Standards Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **Thursday 13th July, 2023**, Room 18.05, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Ruth Bush (Chair), Md Shamsed Chowdhury, Sara Hassan and Tim Mitchell

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

1 MEMBERSHIP

1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Louise Hyams.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2023 be signed by the Chair as a correct record of proceedings.

4 SAFETY PROTOCOL FOR COUNCILLORS

4.1 The Committee received a report which provided an update on the steps taken to ensure the Council had measures in place to support Councillors in maintaining their personal safety and help provide support and advice to Councillors where necessary.

4.2 Members were pleased to note the measures that had been put in place to assist Councillors with their personal safety and in particular welcomed the introduction of a Westminster specific Safety Protocol for Councillors. It was felt that the document was clear and concise and would be of particular use to new Members. The Committee requested that some of the wording of the

Protocol be amended slightly to specify that the Monitoring Officer should be the main point of contact if any Councillors had concerns. It was also requested that the Protocol make explicit reference to confidentiality if any incidents were raised. To raise the profile of the Protocol and make Members aware of the updates the Committee suggested a link to it be circulated to all Members.

- 4.3 To provide further advice to Members the Committee requested that extracts from the LGA guidance on safety for Councillors be circulated as this would complement the personal safety training session planned for later in the year. The Director of Law and Governance also confirmed that she would be holding drop-in sessions for Councillors where they could attend to discuss any experiences they've had, to provide advice and let any trends/themes inform policy development.

RESOLVED:

That

- 1) The Safety Protocol for Members be updated and circulated;
- 2) Extracts from the LGA Guidance on Councillor Safety be circulated to Members; and
- 3) Drop-in sessions for Councillors be arranged to discuss personal safety experiences and provide advice.

5 WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

- 5.1 The Committee noted the 2023-24 Work Programme and was asked to consider any items they would like to come to future meetings.
- 5.2 Members discussed the Question-and-Answer Session to be held with the Leader and potential topics for discussion.
- 5.3 The Committee also discussed the work previously undertaken on the Member/Officer Protocol and were pleased to note that the Chief Executive and the Director of Law and Governance were providing training to all of the Executive Management Team and Directors, the contents of which would then be cascaded through each directorate.
- 5.4 The Committee also offered its congratulations to Asif Iqbal MBE on his appointment to the British Sign Language Advisory Board.

The Meeting ended at 7.39pm.

CHAIR: _____

DATE: _____

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City of Westminster Standards Committee

Meeting:	Standards Committee
Date:	29 November 2023
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Member Complaints – Annual Report
Report of:	Parveen Akhtar – Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report is the Annual report to the Committee setting out, in summary, details of complaints against Members of the Council, since the last report to the Committee in December 2022.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the outcomes of complaints against Members referred to in paragraph 3 of this report. No complaints have been referred to the Standards Committee for a hearing.

3. Member complaints

- 3.1 This report considers Member complaints for the period November 2021 to October 2022. During this period the Monitoring Officer has received three complaints.
- 3.2 One complaint related to a failure to respond to a resident in a timely manner and a request by the resident to provide their data. The issue was referred to the data protection team to action a subject access request on behalf of the resident.
- 3.3 A second complaint related to an alleged breach of data protection. The Complainant was asked for further information but did not provide any. The Complainant was referred to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to make a complaint if they had any further concerns.

3.4 A third complaint related to the conduct of a Councillor but was withdrawn by the Complainant as an apology was received.

4. Training

4.1 Councillors are offered annual training on the Members' Code of Conduct. All Members received training on the Code of Conduct following the local elections held in May 2022.

4.2 Further Code of Conduct training was provided to Members in May 2023. A training session was also held in May on the updated Member/Officer Protocol following a review undertaken by the Standards Committee. The training on the updated Protocol was provided in-person and online to all Members and formed part of the process of ensuring the behaviours and treatment that both Members and Officers could expect from the other was embedded in the culture throughout the organisation.

4.3 The Monitoring Officer will continue to review data and monitor any themes and trends relating to the code of conduct which emerge. Monitoring the number of complaints received and the nature of the complaints will enable the Monitoring Officer and Committee to identify any trends and make recommendations for additional training and guidance as appropriate.

4.4 Members of the Standards Committee can also discuss with the Monitoring Officer any further training, linked to the Code of Conduct, they consider will be helpful for Members.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications for this report

6. Legal Implications

6.1 The Council and individual Members are required to promote and maintain high standards of ethical behaviour as required under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 ("the Act"). Under section of the 28 of the Act, the Council must have in place "arrangements" under which allegations that a member or co-opted member of the Council, or of a Committee of Sub-Committee of the Council, has failed to comply with Code of Conduct, can be investigated and decisions made on such allegations.

7. Consultation

7.1 The report is for information only.

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

Tristan Fieldsend, Senior Committee and Councillor Co-Ordinator

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Date:	29 November 2023
Classification:	For General Release
Title:	Work Programme 2023-2024
Report of:	The Director of Law and Governance
Financial Summary:	There are no financial implications arising from this report.
Report Author and Contact Details:	Tristan Fieldsend, Senior Committee and Councillor Co-ordinator Email: tfieldsend@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Members are asked to review the work programme for 2023-2024 set out as Appendix 2 to the report and identify any other items it wishes to include on 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 three 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**

Background Papers: None.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

CONSTITUTION

5 Members of the Council, 3 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 2023/24

Standards Committee

13 July 2023		
Safety Protocol for Councillors	To receive an update on measures in place to support Councillors in maintaining their personal safety.	Parveen Akhtar
29 November 2023		
Annual Update on Member Complaints	To receive a report on complaints against members.	Parveen Akhtar
Annual Q&A with the Leader of the council on Ethical Standards	To submit questions to the Leader of the Council on Ethical standards in relation to Members.	
22 February 2024		
Annual Code of Conduct Review	To receive an annual report reviewing the Code of Conduct.	Parveen Akhtar
Biennial Standards Committee Report	To consider a report on the work of the committee since March 2022.	Tristan Fieldsend

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