



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

# MINUTES

## Standards Committee

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **Thursday 15th September 2022**, Room 18.12, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

**Members Present:** Councillors Patricia McAllister (Chair), Melvyn Caplan, Md Shamsed Chowdhury, Sara Hassan and Louise Hyams

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

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Tim Mitchell

#### 1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 It was noted that Councillor Melvyn Caplan was substituting for Councillor Tim Mitchell.

#### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were none.

#### 3 MINUTES

- 3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2022 be signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

#### 4 REVIEW OF THE MEMBER/OFFICER PROTOCOL

- 4.1 Parveen Akhtar, Director of Law, introduced the report setting out the review undertaken to strengthen the guidance on relationships between Officers and Members. The intention was that the updated protocol helped support the establishment of good working relationships between Members and Officers in their work together and described their different but complementary roles within the Council.

- 4.2 The Committee welcomed the review of the protocol and agreed a strong, constructive, and trusting relationship between Members and Officers was essential to the effective and efficient working of the Council. The amendments to the protocol were considered appropriate in bringing the document up to date and in particular the importance of including the Nolan Principles in the protocol was noted along with a separate section on bullying.
- 4.3 During the Committee's discussions several amendments to the draft protocol were suggested. These included an updating of the section on the roles of Chairs. This included some historic language regarding Chairs acting as spokespersons on certain issues. It was considered that this reflected historical practice rather than the current situation and as such this section of the paragraph should be deleted. Concern was also expressed that under the 'Correspondence and Communications' section there was no mention of what the consequences were if Members had not received a response to an enquiry from an officer before the expiry of ten days. In response it was confirmed this paragraph could be amended to explain that if Members had not received any response after the expiry of ten days the relevant Director should be informed. One final update related to amending all references to Chairman in the protocol to Chair as the majority of the Committee felt this would be a more appropriate reference.
- 4.4 The Committee discussed the significance of the protocol and was of the opinion that it should form an important part of the induction process for new Members and officers, with refresher training also available for existing Members and officers. This would form part of the process of ensuring the behaviours and treatment that each can expect from the other was embedded in the culture throughout the organisation.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the revised Member/Officer Protocol be recommended for approval to the General Purposes Committee and Full Council subject to the following amendments:
  - i) The bullying paragraph be repositioned in a more prominent position nearer the start of the protocol to reflect its importance;
  - ii) The Role of Chairs paragraph be updated to remove historical language around the position of Chairs as spokespersons;
  - iii) References to Chairman in the protocol be changed to Chair ;and
  - iv) An addition to the Correspondence and Communications paragraph setting out that if Members had not received any response from officers to an enquiry after the expiry of ten days then the relevant Director should be informed.

- 2) That training on the Member/Officer Protocol be mandatory for all new Members and Officers with regular refresher sessions held for all existing Members and Officers.

## **5 WORK PROGRAMME**

- 5.1 The Committee noted the 2022-23 Work Programme and was asked to consider any items they would like to come to future meetings.
- 5.2 Members discussed the Councillor training programme and commented on the comprehensive nature of the recent induction training undertaken. The importance of refresher training was stressed however, especially for significant topics such as the use of social media and diversity and inclusion. The Committee was informed that the Member training programme was organised by the Committee and Councillor Support Manager and Members could forward on any suggestions for potential future training sessions.

The Meeting ended at 7.24pm

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

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