

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 25TH JANUARY, 2021, 7.00 - 8.50 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Felicia Opoku (Chair), Councillor James Chiriyankandath, Councillor Makbule Gunes, Councillor Julia Ogjehor, and Councillor Elin Weston.

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred to the notice of filming at meetings and this information was noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Chiriyankandath noted that he would be making a declaration in relation to Standards Complaint SC005/1920. He explained that he would make this declaration with full details in the exempt part of the meeting; this was because making the declaration would involve information relating to an individual or likely to reveal the identity of an individual. Cllr Chiriyankandath clarified that he would be considering the item with an open mind.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 2 November 2020 and the minutes of the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee meeting held on 12 November 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

6. UPDATE ON NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBER APPOINTMENTS AND PROCESS

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the report which provided an update on co-opted member appointments, including the proposed scrutiny protocol for non-voting co-opted members and other councils' procedures for non-voting co-opted member interests.

It was explained that the Council encouraged community organisations to be involved and that there were two non-voting co-opted members on scrutiny panels. It was noted that Standards Committee members had expressed some concerns that non-voting co-opted members were not required to declare any interests. Consequently, it was proposed to include additional detail about the role and expectations of non-voting co-opted members in the Overview and Scrutiny Protocol; this would include a recommendation to declare any interests. It was noted that the additional detail was included as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Committee welcomed the addition of a process for non-voting co-opted members and felt that this would improve transparency. It was also noted that the exclamation mark at the end of section 2.3 of the protocol should be replaced with a full stop. It was confirmed that, once agreed by Overview and Scrutiny, the protocol would be published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED

To note the draft protocol for the appointment of non-voting co-opted members.

7. REPORT RESPONDING TO MEMBER COMMENTS IN THE REVIEW OF MEMBER ALLOWANCES THAT REGULATORY COMMITTEE SHOULD BE FORMALLY RECONSTITUTED AS TWO SEPARATE COMMITTEES - A PLANNING COMMITTEE AND A LICENSING COMMITTEE

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the report which provided further information and options in relation to the potential separation of the Regulatory Committee into two committees with separate planning and licensing functions. It was explained that four options were set out in the report for the Committee's consideration. It was noted that the Standards Committee had initially considered this issue at its meeting in November 2020 where it had received a report which stated that the separation of licensing function could require an additional Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the second Licensing Sub-Committee. Following some investigation, it had been confirmed that it would be possible to have one Licensing Sub-Committee, with only one SRA for licensing overall, rather than two.

It was noted that the four options for separating the planning and licensing functions had been discussed at the Regulatory Committee meeting on 14 January 2021 and the comments had been circulated as a late report. It was noted that the Chair had agreed that this would be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency by reason of special circumstances, namely that the comments of the Regulatory Committee could be considered by the Standards Committee in a timely manner. The Regulatory Committee considered that it would be important for the arrangements to retain the ability for regulatory policy input, that any changes should aim to reduce workload, and that additional information was required. The Regulatory Committee had agreed that a smaller group of committee members would meet informally to discuss the issue and, in particular, how the four options outlined would work in practice, the possible number of members on Planning and Licensing, meeting frequency, and the impact on the seat allocations.

The Committee enquired about the timescales for recommending any changes to Council. The Democratic Services Manager explained that the small group of Regulatory Committee members would be meeting in mid to late February 2021 and it was anticipated that their views would be considered by the Regulatory Committee on 1 March 2021; any views could then be presented to the Standards Committee on 2 March 2021 and any recommendations would be made to Council in May 2021. The Interim Monitoring Officer added that, as any recommendations would be presented to Council, it would be important to make sure that all councillors were aware of the proposals and that there was wider support for any changes.

The Committee expressed a preference for replacing the Regulatory Committee arrangements with a Planning Committee that dealt with strategic planning matters, a Planning Sub-Committee that dealt with planning applications, a Licensing Committee that dealt with strategic and statutory licensing matters, and a Licensing Sub-Committee that dealt with licensing applications.

The Chair noted that it would be useful for the Regulatory Committee and Standards Committee to receive more detailed information about any proposals, including how they would impact the number of members on each committee and the overall number of meetings per year; it was added that it would be helpful to compare the proposed arrangements with the arrangements from 2017, when there was no SRA for the Vice-Chair of Regulatory Committee.

RESOLVED

1. To note the information contained in the report and comments from the Regulatory Committee.
2. To receive a further update at the Standards Committee meeting on 2 March 2021.

8. MEMBER ALLOWANCES 2021- 22

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the report which presented the Member Allowances Scheme for 2021-22. It was explained that the Standards Committee was asked to comment on any changes required to the scheme before the final version was presented to Council for approval in May 2021. It was highlighted that the appendices included amendments to reflect the 2% pay increase for members that was agreed by Council in March 2020 and applied in arrears from September 2020. It was noted that Council had agreed to apply a maximum 2% uplift in member allowances if local government officers received a pay increase; this had been recommended following the detailed review of member allowances in 2019-20. It was reported that, based on initial information from Human Resources, it was anticipated that local government officers would not receive a pay increase this year.

The Committee considered that, given the current situation in local government and in the country more generally, it would not be appropriate for there to be any increases to member allowances for 2021-22. It was clarified that member allowances had been increased by 2% in 2020-21 and it was noted that any potential future increases could be considered in 2022-23.

The Chair noted that there would only be an increase in member allowances if there was an increase in local government officers' pay and that any increase in member allowances was capped at a maximum of 2%. It was commented that it was anticipated that there would be no increase in local government officers' pay this year and, therefore, the existing Member Allowances Scheme would not be subject to any increases. It was added that the Committee could include a provision to clarify that members allowances should not be increased for 2021-22 in case there was an unexpected decision to increase local government officers' pay. The Committee members agreed to discuss the proposal with their political groups and would present any views at the Standards Committee meeting in March 2021.

RESOLVED

1. To note the proposed Member Allowances Scheme 2021-22.
2. For the Committee members to discuss the proposal with their political groups and to present any views at the Standards Committee meeting in March 2021

9. MINOR UPDATES TO THE PENSIONS COMMITTEE AND BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Principal Committee Co-ordinator introduced the report which sought to amend the wording of the Pensions Committee and Board terms of reference in relation to employer representatives to bring it in line with the Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2015 (the Pensions Regulations). It was explained that the existing wording in relation to employer members of the Pensions Committee and Board in the Haringey Council constitution was narrower than the statutory wording in the Pensions Regulations. The proposed amendment would bring the wording in line with the Pensions Regulations so that employer members would not need to be from scheduled and admitted employers but would need to have the capacity to represent scheduled and admitted employers.

It was noted that the Pensions Committee and Board had considered the proposal at its meeting on 21 January 2021, had noted the proposed amendment, and hoped that the amended wording, which would provide a wider pool of potential employer representatives, would assist in filling the employer representative vacancy which had existed for several years. It was explained that the comments of the Pensions Committee and Board had been circulated as a late report; the Chair had agreed that this would be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency by reason of special circumstances, namely that the comments of the Pensions Committee and Board could be considered by the Standards Committee in a timely manner.

RESOLVED

1. To approve the amendment of the Pensions Committee and Board terms of reference in relation to employer member representatives to bring the wording in line with Pensions Regulations. The amendment would change the wording as

follows (additions in bold text, deletions in strikethrough text): ‘Two representatives ~~from~~ **who have the capacity to represent** scheduled and admitted employers’.

2. To recommend that the amendment to the constitution is adopted by Full Council.

10. COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Chair requested that the Committee receive an update on debt management in June 2021, depending on officer availability.

Cllr Chiriyankandath enquired whether it would be possible to consider some guidance for councillors on social media. The Chair noted that the Committee had agreed the Social Media Guidance for Councillors in 2020 but that it might be useful to include some further examples or case studies to the guidance. The Interim Monitoring Officer confirmed that this should be possible; it was noted that social media policies provided clarity and protection for members and that there had been some further insights into social media best practice during the Covid-19 pandemic.

After the discussion, it was confirmed that the updated work plan was as follows (amendments in bold):

2 March 2021

1. Final Recommendations for the Members’ Allowance Scheme 2021/22.
2. **Report responding to member comments in the review of member allowances that the Regulatory Committee should be formally reconstituted as two separate committees – a Planning Committee and a Licensing Committee.**
3. **Changes to Part 5, Section A of the Constitution on Complaints Against Members – to allow the Monitoring Officer to dismiss a complaint older than three months unless there were exceptional circumstances.**
4. Any other constitutional changes required as a result of the above.
5. **Review of the Social Media Policy.**

June 2021

6. **Changes to Section K of the Constitution on Officer appointments – include statutory officers in the definition of Member recruitment.**
7. **Changes to Scrutiny arrangements in the Constitution.**
8. **Any other constitutional changes required as a result of the above.**
9. **Update on Debt Management.**

Possible future items, to be confirmed

10. Review of the Corporate Committee.
11. Review of the Health and Wellbeing Board Terms of Reference

RESOLVED

To note the Committee work plan, subject to the above amendments.

11. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of urgent business.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the future Standards Committee meetings were scheduled for:

2 March 2021

13. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was noted that items 14-16 contained exempt information as defined in Section 100a of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1985); paras 1 & 2; namely information relating to any individual and information likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for consideration of items 14-16 as they contained exempt information as defined in Section 100a of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1985); paras 1 & 2; namely information relating to any individual and information likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

14. STANDARDS COMPLAINT SC005/1920

The Standards Committee considered the exempt information.

15. EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the exempt minutes of the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee meeting held on 12 November 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

16. NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of exempt urgent business.

CHAIR: Councillor Felicia Opoku

Signed by Chair

Date

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