

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**Wednesday, 14 April 2019 at 14:00 hours in the Committee Room 6,
Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B1 1BB**

A G E N D A

1 APPOINTMENT OF THE COMMITTEE

To note the resolution of the City Council appointing the Committee as follows:

Councillor Julie Johnson
Councillor Carl Rice
Councillor Deirdre Alden
Councillor Peter Fowler
Councillor Neil Eustace
Councillor Paul Tilsley

6 Independent lay members:

Vacancy
Vacancy
Vacancy
Peter Wiseman
Steven Jonas
Professor Stephen Shute

1 member representing the New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council and 1 member representing the Sutton Coldfield Parish Council
(Parish member must be present when matters relating to the Parish Council or its Members are being considered):

New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Councillor – Cllr Ian Bruckshaw
Sutton Coldfield Parish Councillor – Cllr Derrick Griffin

Peter Wiseman as Chairman (independent)

2 APOLOGIES

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Members are reminded that they must declare all relevant pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests arising from any business to be discussed at this meeting. If a disclosable pecuniary interest is declared, a Member must not speak or take part in that agenda item. Any declarations will be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.

- Attached** **4** **TERMS OF REFERENCE**
- To note the Terms of Reference
- Attached** **5** **MINUTES**
- To note the Minutes of the public session of the meeting held on 17 April 2019.
- 6** **UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE MONITORING OFFICER 2018/19**
- Oral report from the Deputy Monitoring Officer.
- 7** **UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE MONITORING OFFICER 2019/20**
- Oral report from the Deputy Monitoring Officer.
- 8** **OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**
- To consider any items of business by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) that, in the opinion of the Chairman, are matters of urgency.
- 9** **AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS**
- Chairman to move:-
- ‘In an urgent situation between meetings, the Chair jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee’.
- 10** **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**
- That in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, which includes exempt information of the category indicated, the public be now excluded from the meeting:-
- (Exempt Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)

PRIVATE AGENDA

- Attached** **11** **PRIVATE MINUTES**
- To note the Minutes of the private session of the meeting held on 17 April 2019 and confirm and sign the minutes as a whole.
- (Exempt Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)
- 12** **OTHER URGENT BUSINESS (EXEMPT INFORMATION)**
- To consider any items of business by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) that, in the opinion of the Chairman, are matters of urgency.

Terms of Reference: Standards Committee

Key Roles

- advising the City Council on the adoption or revision of the Code of Conduct;
- monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct;
- advising, training or arranging to train members and co-opted members on matters relating to the City Council's Code of Conduct.
- determining complaints brought by members of the public alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct by Councillors.
- determining the penalty to be imposed in the event of a breach of the Code being upheld.
- hearing appeals as may be necessary.
- granting any dispensations and dealing with any other powers granted to Standards Committees by legislation.
- to submit an Annual report on the work of the Standards Committee and, generally, promoting the standards of ethical conduct and behaviour expected of Councillors.

The Standards Committee shall also determine under Sections 1 and 2 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989: -

- any application received from any officer of the Council for exemption from political restriction; and
- any application to consider whether a post should be included in the list maintained by the Council under Section 2(2) of the 1989 Act, and may direct the Council to include a post in that list.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE 17 APRIL 2019

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 17 APRIL 2019 AT 1400 HOURS IN THE HMS DARING ROOM, COUNCIL HOUSE, VICTORIA SQUARE, BIRMINGHAM B1 1BB

PRESENT: - Mr Peter Wiseman in the Chair;

Councillor Deirdre Alden, Councillor Adrian Delaney, Councillor Julie Johnson, Steven Jonas, Councillor Carl Rice, Stephen Shute, Councillor Paul Tilsley and Raymond Tomkinson (Independent Person).

ALSO PRESENT: -

Rob Connelly, Acting Assistant Director - Governance
Safeena Tonks, Electoral Services Manager, Finance and Governance

APOLOGIES

319 Apologies were received from Councillor Neil Eustace, Sutton Coldfield Parish Councillor Derrick Griffin and New Frankley Parish Councillor Ian Bruckshaw.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

320 No interests were declared.

MINUTES

321 The Minutes of the public session of the meeting held on 13 February 2019, having been previously circulated, were agreed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of an apology from Stephen Shute.

With reference to Minute No. 308 – Update on Complaints 2018/19, concern was expressed regarding deterioration in the relationship between the electorate and Elected Members, including abuse towards Elected Members on social media. It was noted that many complaints related to service delivery and taxis, which are not a Standards matter for a complaint against a Councillor.

Councillors had expressed concerns generally regarding the problem of obtaining responses from officers, with fewer officers dealing with issues and group email addresses being used by teams.

Rob Connelly, Deputy Monitoring Officer, acknowledged the importance of issues being resolved at the earliest possible stage and advised that he would raise this matter in an update on standards to the Chief Executive. It was important to resolve breakdowns in communications and the Committee felt that it was good practice for Councillors to be provided with a regularly updated list of officer contacts.

The Committee noted that a new complication had arisen following the introduction of Wards with 1 or 2 Members, as Members did not have the same level of support from colleagues within their Ward. Residents had high expectations, which were exacerbated by the speed of emails. Same-day replies had become more frequent, but that expectation was not matched by Council systems.

PROPOSED TRAINING ON DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

322 Rob Connelly, Deputy Monitoring Officer, gave a verbal update and advised Members that he had considered the guidance on declaring interests produced in 2013, but had found that they required some revision. He tabled a set of draft presentation sheets for the Committee's information and invited feedback on the contents.

It was felt that there were too many pages and that the background information could be deleted, as it would not be relevant to new Members and was known by older Members. Councillor Carl Rice drew attention to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee task group/review of Member development that had been undertaken previously. Some Members had believed that they 'knew it all' and did not need training. Also, members had found it difficult to cope with the large volume of documents and presentations.

The Chairman acknowledged those points and expressed concern that the way the City Council conducted its business needed to be part of the induction process for Councillors. Members felt that the whole induction process needed to be reviewed because it was fragmented and not sufficiently co-ordinated, with heavy reliance on mentors. An induction 'pack' was needed, with a checklist of 'tasks' that included what Members needed, rather than what officers thought they needed. Examples could be given of what happens when things go wrong and why.

It was noted that the Improvement Panel had wanted there be a higher perception of standards of conduct and it was agreed that mandatory training should be introduced that formed part of the induction process.

UPDATE ON RECRUITMENT OF LAY MEMBERS

- 323 Rob Connelly, Deputy Monitoring Officer, gave a verbal report and advised that recently he had sought volunteers to be on the Recruitment Panel. Advertising would take place alongside recruitment for membership of the Independent Remuneration Panel. The positions would be advertised shortly.

Councillor Paul Tilsley advised that he would be willing to be a Panel member.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

- 324 No urgent business was raised.
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AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

- 325 **RESOLVED:** -

‘In an urgent situation between meetings, the Chairman jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee’.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

- 326 **RESOLVED:**

That in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, which includes exempt information of the category indicated, the public be now excluded from the meeting: -

(Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)
