

STANDARDS AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
9 NOVEMBER 2017

(7.15 pm - 8.40 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Peter McCabe (in the Chair),
Councillor Janice Howard, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Adam Bush, Councillor John Dehaney,
Councillor Mary-Jane Jeanes, Councillor Ian Munn,
Councillor Gregory Udeh, Councillor David Williams,
Councillor John Bowcott and Councillor Mary Curtin

Independent Person – Pam Donovan

ALSO
PRESENT: Caroline Holland – Director of Corporate Services
Paul Evans – Assistant Director of Corporate Governance
Suresh Patel – External Auditor – Ernst Young
Roger Kershaw – Interim Assistant Director of Resources
Margaret Cullerton – Head of Internal Audit
Kevin Holland – Head of Shared Fraud Partnership
Paul Foster – Head of the Regulatory Services Partnership
John Hill – Assistant Director - Public Protection
Kim Brown – HR Lead
Amy Dumitrescu – Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September were agreed subject to the following amendment:

Item 4: Audited Final Accounts 2016/17

“They explained that although the introduction of the new financial system had caused delays to this year’s accounts, they were now content that the issues would be solved before next year’s accounts.”

To be amended to read:

They explained that although the introduction of the new financial system had caused delays to this year's accounts, they were **now content that officers were taking action to resolve the issues for next years accounts.**

4 EXTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL LETTER (Agenda Item 4)

Suresh Patel from Ernst and Young LLP presented the Annual Audit Letter and invited questions and comments.

5 AUDITED FINAL ACCOUNTS 2016/17 (Agenda Item 5)

The Director of Corporate Services presented the report which was brought at the request of the Committee to update on the progress on the accounts. The Director of Corporate Services gave an overview as detailed in the report of the action plan to meet the tighter deadlines to give assurance that this would be met on time.

In response to questions officers advised that they had committed to bring another update to the next meeting of Standards and General Purposes and that a large amount of preliminary work had been undertaken including a scheduled meeting with External Audit in the week following the meeting and regular detailed conversations were progressing and detailed plans were in place.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee approved the audited Statement of Accounts, including the Pension Fund accounts.

6 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT ON ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN (Agenda Item 6)

The Head of Internal Audit presented the report and invited questions and comments.

RESOLVED:

That members noted the report and commented upon matters arising from the Internal Audit Progress Report.

7 FRAUD UPDATE (Agenda Item 7)

The Head of the Shared Fraud Partnership presented the report and invited comments and questions.

Members praised the positive progress on the areas of blue badge fraud and right to buy fraud.

RESOLVED:

- A. That members noted the Fraud Progress report and commented on the matters arising from it.

8 CHANGES TO THE JOINT REGULATORY SERVICE COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 8)

The Head of the Regulatory Services Partnership presented the report advising that following agreement of the Merton and Richmond Council Cabinets to admit the London Borough of Wandsworth to the partnership, a review of the terms of reference was required.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the Standards and General Purposes committee recommends that Council approves the amended Terms of Reference for the Joint Regulatory Services Committee (JRSC) as set out in Appendix 3
- B. That the Standards and General Purposes Committee recommends that Council agrees that the Chair of the JRSC rotates on an annual basis between Merton, Richmond and Wandsworth.

9 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT (Agenda Item 9)

The Assistant Director of Corporate Governance presented the report.

In response to member questions the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance clarified the process for members receiving complaints and gave an overview of the way complaints are logged and recorded.

The Assistant Director of Corporate Governance confirmed that the statistics included those issues reported online through the website.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted the contents of the report.

10 ANNUAL GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY REPORT (MEMBERS) (Agenda Item 10)

The Assistant Director for Corporate Governance presented the report and the Committee noted the extract from the register.

11 ANNUAL GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY REPORT (OFFICERS) (Agenda Item 11)

The Assistant Director for Corporate Governance presented the report, advising that managers had been reminded to advise officers to complete the required declarations.

The Committee noted the extract from the register.

12 RISK MANAGEMENT (Agenda Item 12)

The Director of Corporate Services presented the report advising the Committee of the points which had been updated. In response to a member question on the approach to agreeing the key risks, the Director of Corporate Services responded that our insurance advisors were lined up to do a sense check of these.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the Standards and General Purposes Committee reviewed the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment.
- B. To consider the Key Strategic Risks and Issues faced by the Council and determine whether these are being actively managed.

13 REVIEW OF POLLING PLACES (Agenda Item 13)

The Assistant Director of Corporate Governance presented the report, advising that the group offices had been consulted on the proposals.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the Standards and General Purposes Committee recommends that the full council agrees the designation of the Acacia Adventure Playground building as the polling place for polling district HD in Figges Marsh Ward and retains the use of the Acacia Centre for polling district IE in Longthornton Ward.
- B. That the Standards and General Purposes Committee recommends that the full council agrees that Dundonald Recreation Ground Pavilion replaces Dundonald Primary School as a polling place for polling district PA in Dundonald Ward.
- C. That the Standards and General Purposes Committee recommends that the full council agrees that Joseph Hood Primary School replaces Merton Adult College as a polling place for polling district SA in Cannon Hill Ward.

14 MEMBER INDUCTION (Agenda Item 14)

The HR Lead presented the report and gave an overview of the training which had taken place since May 2014 and the proposed training from 2018. The HR Lead advised that these dates were currently tentative and sought feedback from members on the proposals.

Members discussed the proposals noting that training for members on Planning Committee would require further in depth training and discussed the options for a buddy/mentoring system for new Councillors.

The committee requested specific training for members who would become mentors to new members. The HR Lead undertook to include this in the plan.

Members resolved to discuss the proposals further and feedback to the HR Lead.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee agreed the draft learning and development plan for 2018/19 subject to the addition of mentoring
2. That the Committee agreed the priority development activities for members as outlined in 2.10 of the report.
3. That the Committee agreed that there will be elements of mandatory training for members.
4. That Committee considered ways to encourage increased member take-up for development activities.

15 TEMPORARY AND CONTRACT STAFF UPDATE (Agenda Item 15)

The HR Lead presented the report advising that the use of temporary and agency staff was being monitored and checked regularly and that the new temporary to permanent guidance had now been implemented. The HR Lead was optimistic that numbers of staff would fall within the next quarter as there were a number of temporary projects nearing conclusion.

Members asked questions and discussed the methods which were being used to ensure that current staff were being upskilled and retained.

RESOLVED:

That members noted the progress made to monitor and control the use of temporary workers and consultants.

16 COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS (Agenda Item 16)

The Committee received a verbal update from the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance on recent complaints against members.

The Assistant Director of Corporate Governance advised the Committee that there was currently one complaint under investigation, for which the independent investigator had provided a draft report. The Independent Person and Deputy Monitoring Officer would be considering the response to the report.

The Committee noted that there had been no further complaints received since the last meeting.

17 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 17)

Members requested that the update on the Final Accounts for 2016/17 be added to the March 2018 work programme. This was agreed by the Committee.