

STANDARDS AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE  
23 JULY 2020

(7.15 pm - 9.44 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Peter McCabe (in the Chair),  
Councillor Adam Bush, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,  
Councillor Ben Butler, Councillor John Dehaney,  
Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Dickie Wilkinson,  
Councillor David Williams, Councillor Hina Bokhari,  
Councillor Mary Curtin, Councillor Thomas Barlow and  
Councillor Pauline Cowper

ALSO PRESENT Suresh Patel – Ernst & Young  
Katy Willison – Independent Person  
Clive Douglas – Independent Person

Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Louise Round  
(Monitoring Officer/Managing Director SLLP), Roger Kershaw  
(Assistant Director Resources), John Bosley (Assistant Director  
Public Space, Contract and Commissioning), David Keppler  
(Head of Revenues and Benefits), Margaret Culleton (Head of  
Internal Audit), Barbara Batchelor (Head of Organisation  
Development and HR Strategy), Liz Hammond (Interim Head of  
HR), Stella Akintan (Scrutiny Officer) and 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 interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2020 were agreed as  
a correct record.

4 UPDATE TO THE EY 2019/20 AUDIT PLAN AS A RESULT OF COVID-19  
(Agenda Item 4)

The External Auditor presented the report, providing an update on the impact on the  
current audit plans of the Covid19 pandemic. The External Auditor highlighted the  
key changes, noting that the deadline for the draft accounts had been postponed  
from the end of May 2020 to 31 August 2020, however both the accounts and  
pension fund accounts had been published in July and May 2020 respectively. The

deadline for publishing audited accounts had now been postponed until the end of November 2020.

The External Auditor advised the committee that it was likely that there would be an materiality uncertainty caveat included within the reports for property valuation due to the volatility of the current market.

In response to member questions, the External Auditor had highlighted the going concern arrangement as an area of focus. Audits would be completed remotely and the external auditor noted the co-operation from the Council's finance team.

The Committee noted their thanks to all staff for their hard work.

RESOLVED: That members noted the report.

## 5 INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The Head of Internal Audit presented the Annual Report, noting they had received 75% substantial assurance for the year. An update would be brought to a future committee on any outstanding actions. The report also included an update on the work of the Fraud Partnership.

In response to member questions, the Head of Internal Audit responded that the financial systems were audited over a rolling year due to resource capacity.

The Assistant Head of Resources advised the committee in response to questions on payment cards which had been an area of limited assurance that the previous system was being changed and an audit would be performed before the migration and then again after migration.

Referring to the limited assurance report on tree maintenance, the Assistant Director of Public Space, Contract and Commissioning advised the Committee that work was ongoing on a tree strategy.

The report was noted.

## 6 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (Agenda Item 6)

The Head of Internal Audit presented the report, noting there had been a review of governance arrangements and the whistleblowing policy had been amended to remove the reference to the charity Protect who were no longer being used.

RESOLVED:

a) The Committee considered and commented on the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2019-20

b) The Committee approved the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2019/20 prior to final sign off by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

c) The Committee agreed the proposed adjustment to the Whistleblowing policy

## 7 SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS (Agenda Item 7)

The Monitoring Officer presented the report which had been amended from the March 2020 committee version following consultation with all political groups. Councillors thanked officers for the opportunity to comment on the guidance.

### RESOLVED:

The Committee approved the Social Media Guidance for Councillors and to recommend its adoption to full Council.

## 8 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN REPORT - ENFORCEMENT AGENTS (Agenda Item 8)

The Head of Revenues and Benefits presented the report and appendices. It was noted that the report was accurate however there was one point which the Council disputed with the LGSCO in relation to charging multiple fees on cases. The improvement plan had been started in September 2019.

In response to questions from members, the Head of Revenues and Benefits advised that enforcement agents had received additional training as part of the improvement plan and copies of training certificates were held by the Council. The approach to body cameras had also been amended and would now be turned on at all times and the footage retained for a longer period of time. Random monitoring of every bailiff was also taking place.

Members noted that currently it was difficult to review the impact of the improvement plan where staff had been redeployed into other roles due to the pandemic. It was therefore suggested that an update report be brought back to the Committee in 6 months' time.

### RESOLVED:

1. That the Standards & General Purposes Committee considered the contents of the report regarding the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) decision and report.
2. That Standards & General Purposes Committee advised that it requires an update report on the improvement action plan in 6 months time.

## 9 PROPOSED RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION'S CONSULTATION ON A NEW MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS (Agenda Item 9)

The Monitoring Officer presented the report which provided a draft model code of conduct for Councillors from the LGA (Local Government Association) and a suggested Council response to the consultation on the code.

Members agreed they were content with the suggested responses and felt it would be appropriate to retain the current limit on the list of contacts for whom interests were required to be disclosed for example retaining the current requirement of spouses/partners only.

RESOLVED:

- A. The Committee considered the attached proposed response to the Local Government Association's Consultation on a new Model Code of Conduct for Members
- B. The Committee authorised the Monitoring Officer to submit the response at Appendix B, as amended to take into account the Committee's views.

10 REVISED RIPA POLICY AND UPDATE ON RIPA AUTHORISATIONS  
(Agenda Item 10)

The Monitoring Officer presented the report which followed an inspection in January 2020. The policy had been amended and quality assurance of any authorisations had been improved as a result.

RESOLVED:

- A. That members noted the purposes for which investigations have been authorised under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000.
- B. That members noted the outcome of the inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO).
- C. That members agreed the revised RIPA policy.

11 PROPOSED REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION AND INTERIM AMENDMENTS TO THE APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND THE EMPLOYEE PROCEDURE RULES (Agenda Item 11)

The Monitoring Officer presented the report which had previously been discussed at the March 2020 committee. A number of small drafting changes had been made. A group was to be setup to look at best practice and to assist with reviewing the constitution.

It was noted that the procedure rules could also be looked at to ensure they were up to date with current best practice.

Members agreed the recommendations on the basis that the member working group could be attended by any Councillor and to ensure there was political balance as well as ensuring that there was also a number of BAME councillors included within the working group.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the Committee recommended that Council approves the amended Terms of Reference for the Appointments Committee and Officer Employment Procedure Rules, as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively;
- B. That Council be recommended to delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to amend the Council's constitution to incorporate any direct or consequential changes resulting from the approval of recommendation A above; and
- C. That the Committee agreed to commence a review of the Council's constitution and appoints a working group of members to carry out that review in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer.

12 COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS (Agenda Item 12)

The Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that since the last meeting there had been one complaint against a member regarding an incident on social media. The complainant had received an apology and the decision of the Monitoring Officer was that the complaint did not require any further action or investigation.

#### 13 MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT (Agenda Item 13)

The Head of Organisation Development and HR Strategy presented the report providing the proposed training programme for current councillors to run until May 2022. The report also provided details of the engagement for new councillors in preparation for the May 2022 local elections. Members were advised that the training budget is held by HR for the whole Council and member training is developed in consultation with Democratic Services.

Members suggested a number of possible additional training subjects including effective business writing and wellbeing awareness.

#### RESOLVED:

A. That the Committee agreed that additional proposed training sessions and any remaining development activities identified as mandatory/priority for members are undertaken from August 2020 onwards

B. That Committee considered ways to encourage increased member take-up for development activities including whether a lead champion should be appointed to support an increase in members' attendance at training events.

C. That Committee approved in principle that sessions for prospective elected members are planned for November 2020.

D. That Committee approved the agenda for candidates who would wish to be elected members, and that final decision will be the responsibility of Louise Round/Barbara Batchelor

E. That Committee approved that names/nominations of peer support for the engagement sessions of newly elected members will be sought through Group Offices.

F. That Committee approved the Members Induction Training pathway.

#### 14 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 14)

The Work Programme was noted.

#### 15 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda Item 15)

RESOLVED: That the public were excluded from the meeting during consideration of item 16 on the grounds that it is exempt from disclosure for the reasons stated in the report.

#### 16 TEMPORARY AND CONTRACT STAFF UPDATE (Agenda Item 16)

The Interim Head of HR presented the report advising that the team were regularly reviewing the use of temporary and contract staff and ways in which to reduce this.

Members reviewed and discussed the exempt appendix.

The Committee agreed that the report should continue to be brought to the Committee twice per year and requested that going forward information was also provided on the recruitment of BAME staff.

**RESOLVED:**

- A. The Committee noted progress made to monitor and control the use of temporary workers and consultants
- B. The Committee reviewed the frequency with which this Committee should receive this report