

Agenda Item 3

STANDARDS AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE 7 NOVEMBER 2019

(7.15 pm - 9.27 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Peter McCabe (in the Chair),
Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Councillor John Dehaney,
Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Dickie Wilkinson,
Councillor David Williams, Councillor Mary Curtin and
Councillor Thomas Barlow

ALSO PRESENT Suresh Patel – EY
Pam Donovan – Independent Person
Clive Douglas – Independent Person

Caroline Holland (Director - Corporate Services), Roger Kershaw (Assistant Director - Resources), John Bosley (Assistant Director Public Space Contracts and Commissioning), Karin Lane (Head of information governance), Andrew Robertson (Head of Electoral Services), Liz Hammond (Interim Head of HR), Fiona Thomsen (Interim Assistant Director of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer), Kevin Holland (Head of South West London Fraud Partnership), Margaret Culleton (Head of Internal Audit) and Amy Dumitrescu (Democratic Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pauline Cowper, Hina Bokhari, Ben Butler and Adam Bush. Councillors Stan Anderson, Jenifer Gould and Omar Bush attended as substitutes.

Order of Agenda

The Chair announced that the agenda order would be amended so that Items 17 and 18 were taken after Item 9. The Committee agreed to this amendment.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

4 EXTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL LETTER (Agenda Item 4)

The External Auditor presented the report and advised that the accounts had been signed on 31 July 2019 as planned, noting that over 200 Local Authorities had been unable to meet this deadline.

The Committee expressed their thanks to all those involved in completing the accounts.

5 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The Head of Internal Audit presented the report and gave an update on the current progress being made.

RESOLVED: That Members noted the report and commented upon matters arising from the Internal Audit Progress Report.

6 FRAUD UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

The Head of South West London Fraud Partnership presented the report.

Members welcomed the increased focus on investigations into misuse of blue badges and the Head of SWLFP undertook to assess how the sanctions and referrals could be further publicised.

In response to further questions, the Head of SWLFP advised that the team worked with the police to refer cases to them where appropriate.

RESOLVED: That Members noted the Fraud Progress Report and commented on the matters arising from it.

7 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT (Agenda Item 7)

The Head of Information Governance presented the report, advising that complaints levels had been exceptionally high during 2018/19 and that Members Enquires had doubled during this period. This had been due in part to the changes within the Waste Collection Service and the introduction of wheeled bins. However it was noted that the number of complaints and member enquiries had now reduced to expected levels.

In response to questions, the Head of Information Governance advised that there was not currently a method to determine when complaints were chasing progress on previous complaints or when multiple councillors from the same ward had logged the same issue. It was currently being assessed whether a case management system could be used to manage these issues.

RESOLVED: That Members noted and commented on the report.

8 REVIEW OF POLLING PLACES (Agenda Item 8)

The Head of Electoral Services presented the report which followed a public consultation on polling places within the Borough. It was recognised that the use of schools causes disruption and alternative locations had been sought where possible. Having previously used 12 schools as polling stations, the changes proposed would lead to this number reducing to 4.

It was noted that the changes would be in place for the General Election in December 2019 and following this election the changes would be reviewed and brought back to the Committee if there were any issues.

Some members expressed concern regarding changing the location of polling stations during winter when there was less light. Officers assured members that a map and explanatory message would be put on polling cards and fluorescent signage would be placed at the new polling stations, all of which had disabled access.

RESOLVED:

That the Standards and General Purposes Committee agreed the polling districts and polling places set out in the Acting Returning Officers Submission.

9 ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENTS UPDATE (Agenda Item 9)

The Assistant Director of Public Space presented the report and gave an overview of the recent work undertaken including a draft fly-tipping strategy and a fly-tipping action plan. The Assistant Director noted that fly-tipping was on the increase nationally however there was now less addressed post and therefore often less evidence has been available within fly-tips. Recent success was outlined including monitoring of a site at which 46 vehicles had been witnessed fly-tipping waste. Following this, 12 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for £400 each had been issued, and one company which had been observed fly-tipping hazardous waste was due to be interviewed shortly.

The Committee encouraged officers to assess a number of suggestions, including:

- Publicising the number of FPNs issued in a particular ward
- Producing more effective signage
- Noting that 80% of fly-tips are from end of tenancies, it was suggested that it might be beneficial to write to estate agents to give them information to pass on to tenants about how to appropriately and legally dispose of any waste arising from moving properties. It was noted this could be done via emailing a PDF to utilise technology available and reduce costs.

In response, the Assistant Director informed members of several initiatives currently also being investigated:

- Refreshing the information on FPNs provided online to bring these more up-to-date
- Investing with the Help Keep Britain Tidy group
- Further use of social media to publicise work being undertaken to clear and combat fly-tipping
- Investigating an information hotline and improved reporting facilities

RESOLVED: That Members reviewed and commented on the current status of environmental prosecutions as outlined in the report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT (Agenda Item 10)

The Director of Corporate Services presented the report and gave an overview of the key risks, noting there was one red risk relating to Children's Schools and Families funding. One additional risk had been added relating to Bishopsford Road Bridge. It was noted that some risks had been removed from the register once they had been green for an extended period of time.

Internal Audit were currently undertaking a review of risk management across the 5 Boroughs and would report back with lessons learned. This would include looking at the methodology of the way assumptions were devised.

Members discussed the Bishopsford Road Bridge and were advised that a further report was due shortly.

RESOLVED:

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

11 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION (Agenda Item 11)

The Monitoring Officer presented the report.

RESOLVED:

That it was recommended to Council that the following amendments to the Council's constitution be authorised:

1. Part 5F (Planning Protocol) as described at Paragraph 2.2 in the report and set out in Appendix 1, in response to advice received from the Local Government Ombudsman; and
2. Part 2, Article 4 Paragraph 4.2a (Policy Framework) as set out in paragraph 2.7 in the report.

12 ANNUAL GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY REPORT (MEMBERS) (Agenda Item 12)

The Monitoring Officer presented the report and advised that their review of gifts & hospitality had shown no issues of concern.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the Committee noted the report

- B. That members were reminded of their responsibility to complete declarations of gifts and hospitality including reasons for acceptance.

13 ANNUAL GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY REPORT (OFFICERS) (Agenda Item 13)

The Monitoring Officer presented the report, noting that numbers of gifts and hospitality were low. All staff would be reminded about their responsibilities.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the Committee noted the report.

14 COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS (Agenda Item 14)

The Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that there had been no complaints against members received since the last meeting.

15 MEMBER TRAINING SESSION UPDATE (Agenda Item 15)

Members were reminded about an upcoming training session for members of the Committee on Audit Reports.

16 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 16)

The Work Programme was noted and agreed.

17 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda Item 17)

RESOLVED: That the public were excluded from the meeting during consideration of item 18 on the grounds that it is exempt from disclosure for the reasons stated in the report.

18 TEMPORARY AND CONTRACT STAFF UPDATE (Agenda Item 18)

The Interim Head of HR presented the report and gave an overview of recent progress to date of conversions of temporary contract staff to permanent. Members encouraged officers to continue to develop ways to grow our own and develop existing staff as well as recruiting young people from the local community.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the Committee noted progress made to monitor and control the use of temporary workers and consultants.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair expressed thanks on behalf of the Committee to Pam Donovan, Independent Person for her contribution over her three year term which completed at the end of November.

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