

# STANDARDS COMMITTEE —Minutes—

**10 JUNE 2009**

**Members Present:**

Mr. Steven Moussavi (Chairman)  
Ms Grace Moody-Stuart  
Mr. Christopher Troke  
Councillor Lisa Homan  
Councillor Nicholas Botterill

**Officers in attendance:**

Michael Cogher, Assistant Director (Legal & Democratic Services)  
Ross Chesterton, Head of Fraud Service  
Gary Marson, Principal Committee Co-ordinator

**ITEM**

**ACTION**

**1     ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED that -**

Mr Steven Moussavi be elected Chairman of the Committee for the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

**2     MR CHRISTOPHER TROKE**

Mr Moussavi took the opportunity to express the Committee's gratitude to the retiring Chairman, Mr Christopher Troke, for his efforts during his period in office.

**3     MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS  
COMMITTEE HELD ON 1 APRIL 2009**

**RESOLVED that -**

the minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2009 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

**4      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Adronie Alford, Stephen Cowan and Donald Johnson.

**5      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**6      TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee noted its terms of reference and membership as agreed at the Annual Council meeting on 27 May 2009.

**7      ANTI FRAUD SERVICE – PRESENTATION**

The Committee received a presentation from Ross Chesterton, Head of the Council's Fraud Service, on the work of his team. Members noted details of the statutory framework within which the Fraud Service operated, its relationships with the Police and other agencies, the scale of its activities, its working practices, priorities and sanctions and details of recent cases. Mr Chesterton also outlined the primary causes of fraudulent behaviour and the cultural changes required to combat it.

The Committee was informed that the costs of the service, which amounted to £740,000pa, were more than offset by an estimated total figure of £1.2m savings in the last financial year as a result of frauds stopped, monies recovered and errors identified. It was also emphasised that there were further intangible and unquantifiable benefits as a result of deterrence. It was noted that exercises to measure staff awareness revealed a year on year improvement in the visibility of the service although there tended to be lower levels of understanding amongst junior staff and those working in peripheral locations.

**8      REGISTERS OF INTERESTS AND GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY**

The Committee welcomed a package of process improvements that had been introduced to ensure the prompt and accurate handling of amendments and updates to the Register of Members Interests and the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

A recent governance audit had found a substantial level of assurance in respect of arrangements for corporate and partnership governance, financial management, the Code of Conduct and maintenance of various statutory registers. However, some weaknesses in control had been identified in relation to the Interests and Gifts and Hospitality Registers. Modifications to working practices had therefore been

introduced to meet the recommendations for change and ensure more responsive and pro-active management of the Registers and support to Councillors in meeting their statutory obligations.

The Committee suggested that in the interests of transparency and accountability, the Gifts and Hospitality Register should be made available for the public to view online, consistent with the practice in respect of Members interests. There was no statutory obstacle to this since the Register was already open to public inspection although it was felt that contextual information would need to be provided in order to explain why some Members, by virtue of their roles and functions, received more in the way of gifts and hospitality than others. It was agreed that an annual report on both registers should be brought to the Committee with effect from June 2010.

**KA/DB to investigate**

**MC/KA**

**RESOLVED that –**

i) the improved processes that have been established to ensure the prompt and accurate handling of amendments to the Members' Register of Interests and the Register of Gifts and Hospitality be noted; and

ii) The Committee receive reports on the contents of the said Registers annually

**9      PRIMARY CARE TRUST**

The Committee noted the effects of the recent integration of senior management arrangements between the Council and the Hammersmith and Fulham Primary Care Trust (PCT) and, in particular, the way in which governance issues were addressed in the PCT. Members expressed support for the partnership working and looked forward to a time when the ethical structures could also be integrated, although it was recognised that for the time being the PCT remained subject to a separate statutory framework.

**RESOLVED that –**

The separate arrangements which apply to the PCT in relation to ethics and conduct be noted

**10      ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES 2009**

The Committee gave consideration to the nomination of delegates to attend the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly of Standards Committees, to be held in Birmingham on 12/13 October 2009.

**RESOLVED that –**

Mr Steven Moussavi be nominated to represent the Council at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly of Standards Committees and an invitation also be extended to Councillor Adronie Alford.

**DB**

**11      COUNCILLORS EXPENSES**

In the light of recent publicity concerning the system of Parliamentary allowances and expenses, the Committee received details of the Council's own scheme of Members Allowances including the basic allowance paid to all Members, special responsibility allowances and the levels of reimbursement for travel and dependant carer expenses. It was noted that local authority allowances were more closely prescribed and transparent than those for Members of Parliament and the Council regularly published both Members entitlements and actual claims. It was agreed that the Committee should receive an annual report setting out the Allowances scheme in detail and confirming the extent of individual claims.

**RESOLVED that –**

A report on Members allowances be submitted to the Committee annually with effect from October 2009.

**MC/KA**

**12      WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee gave further consideration to its work programme for the 2009/10 municipal year. In addition to the previously agreed items, and the annual report on Allowances requested earlier in the meeting, it was felt that an informal social gathering should be arranged for late November in order to bring members of both the Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea Standards Committees together to share best practice and discuss issues of mutual interest.

**DB to note**

**DB to  
coordinate**

**RESOLVED that –**

An invitation be extended to members of the Kensington & Chelsea Standards Committee to attend a social function in November 2009.

**13      EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED that –**

In accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business, on the grounds that it contains the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the said Act, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption currently outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**14      LOCAL COMPLAINTS 2008/09**

The Committee noted details of the case determined during the course of 2008/09 by the Assessment and Review Sub-Committees.

Meeting began: 7:00 pm  
Meeting ended: 8.32 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

- Standards Committee -