



# Report to Council

26 MAY 2010

Mr Stephen  
Moussavi,  
Independent  
Chairman,  
Standards  
Committee

STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL  
REPORT 2009/10

WARDS  
  
All

## Summary

The attached report outlines the activity of work undertaken by the Standards Committee in 2009/10.

## CONTRIBUTORS

ADLDS  
HCS

## RECOMMENDATION:

That the Standards Committee Annual Report 2009/10 be received.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Standards Committee met three times this year: on 10 June, 4 November 2009 and 24 March 2010. The meeting scheduled for 6 January 2010 was cancelled. Mr Steven Moussavi replaced Mr Chris Troke as Chairman for the year, as agreed by Annual Council. Apart from various routine items, such as matters discussed in bulletins from the Standards Board, the following were the main issues considered.

## **2. LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS**

- 2.1 The Committee updated their training in the new system by watching "*That's Wrap*", the latest DVD issued by Standards for England. The DVD took Members through the various stages of local assessment, exploring important or contentious issues along the way. Some of the DVD was filmed at Hammersmith Town Hall. The Committee asked each political group to arrange a showing at one of their group meetings
- 2.2 The Committee agreed that Christopher Troke be co-opted to the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea's Standards Committee. This was in response to a request from Kensington & Chelsea for him to be available to help with any local complaints assessment meetings, if required.

## **3. LOCAL COMPLAINTS CASES**

- 3.1 Two cases were considered during the year 2009-10. These were considered respectively by Assessment Sub-Committees comprising of Grace Moody-Stuart (Chair) and Councillors Johnson and Cowan on 2 February 2010 and Joyce Epstein (Chair) and Councillors Alford and Homan on 24 March 2010. The Sub-Committee decided in each case that no action should be taken on the allegations.
- 3.2 The complainant in the first case did not request a review of the decision but a Review Sub-Committee was convened for 26 April 2010 following a request for a review by the complainant in the second case. The Sub-Committee decided in that no action should be taken in that case.

## **4. PRIMARY CARE TRUST**

- 4.1 Following the joint arrangements between the Council and the Trust, the Committee noted the separate Codes of Conduct which applied to individuals attending the joint meetings of the PCT Board and Cabinet.

## **5. REGISTER OF INTERESTS AND HOSPITALITY**

- 5.1 Following a corporate governance review, the Committee noted that improved processes for dealing with the Members' Register of Interests and the Register of Gifts and Hospitality had been established to ensure the prompt and accurate handling of amendments to the registers.

## **6. COUNCILLORS' EXPENSES**

- 6.1 In light of publicity about 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 dependent carer expenses. The Committee noted that local authority allowances were much more closely prescribed and transparent than those for Members of Parliament, and the Council regularly published both Members entitlements and the actual claims.

- 6.2 The Committee agreed to receive an annual report setting out the allowances scheme in detail and confirming the extent of individual claims. The first of these annual reports was made to the Committee's meeting on 4 November 2009.

## **7. DISPENSATION GUIDANCE**

- 7.1 The Committee received a report enclosing guidance issued by Standards for England following the Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Order 2009. The new guidance corrected an anomaly in the previous regulations. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that although there had been several requests for dispensations in 2005, there had been none since. The Committee decided that, as to the criteria to apply in considering requests for dispensations in the future, each case be considered on its merits.

## **8. PROBITY IN PLANNING**

- 8.1 The Committee received a report on recent guidance issued by the Local Government Association about a revised code of conduct for Members in relation to planning. The guidance complemented and updated the Council's own "*Guidance for Councillors and officers dealing with Planning and Licensing*", as set out in pages 510-520 of the Council's Constitution. The Committee noted the revised LGA Guidance and decided that Members of the Planning Applications Committee be informed of the changes.

## 9. CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

- 9.1 Mr Steven Moussavi and Mr Christopher Troke, the current Chairman and immediate past Chairman respectively, attended **the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Standards Committees in Birmingham on 12 and 13 October 2009**. They reported to the November meeting on workshops and other sessions they had attended.
- 9.2 Their report highlighted possible ways of raising the profile of the Committee within the Council, including making the Standards Committee content on the website more prominent, attendance by Standards Committee Members at Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee meetings and more publicity through H&F News. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that agendas for all these meetings were published on the website and encouraged Standards Committee members to attend any of these meetings if they wished to do so.
- 9.3 On 3 December 2009, the Committee held a **joint meeting with Kensington & Chelsea Standards Committee**. Bob Chilton, Chairman of Standards for England, presented his views on how the new system of dealing with complaints was working across the country and the prospects for the future. Members welcomed the opportunity to meet their counterparts in Kensington & Chelsea. Sophia Lambert, Chairman of their Standards Committee outlined her role as Chairman of the London Standards Committee Chairmen's virtual network.
- 9.4 On 12 January 2010, Mr Christopher Troke, attended the **Annual North West London Standards Networking Event at Brent Town Hall**, along with Kayode Adewumi, Head of Councillors' Services and the Committee Co-ordinator. The event was addressed by Peter Keith-Lucas, and was well attended by North West London boroughs as well as from Councillors and officers from Kensington and Chelsea and Islington.
- 9.5 For the first time, the GLA Standards Committee arranged an afternoon seminar at City Hall to discuss issues of common interest to Standards Committee members across London. The Chairman and Committee Co-ordinator attended this event on 11 February 2010. There were some useful points raised which were reported to the Committee on 24 March 2010.

## 10. WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

The Committee considered the current Whistle Blowing Policy. It was noted that the policy was very infrequently used; no complaints had been made under the policy since 2005. It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer should explore with the Council's Anti-Fraud service ways to re-brand the policy taking into account other best practice in the public sector.

## 11. NEW MEMBERS – INDUCTION

The Committee discussed arrangements for Members elected on 6 May 2010 to be familiarised with the Council's governance arrangements through briefing sessions and an induction pack of information to enable them to comply with ethical standards laid down nationally and locally for performing their role as Members, in relating to Council officers and as representatives of the Council on outside organisations.

## 12. NATIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT

The Committee have noted that the long awaited revised Code of Conduct will now be the subject of further consultation and is not expected to be published until after the General and Local Elections.

## 13. CONCLUSION BY CHAIRMAN (STEVEN MOUSSAVI)

In conclusion, we have made progress in several areas over the past year: training of members, including attendance at the Annual Conference of Standards Committees in Birmingham, organising a joint meeting with the Standards committee of Kensington and Chelsea and attending the Brent Standards Committee annual Networking event. We have dealt with complaints, amended the processes connected with the Register of Interest and Hospitality, ascertaining that the record of Councillors expenses has been excellent. I would like to thank the members of the Standards Committee for their time and energy and look forward to further progress over the coming year.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 BACKGROUND PAPERS

No.	Brief Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext. of holder of file/copy	Department/Location
1.	Brent Networking Event Papers, 12 January 2010	David Bays x 2628	Committee Services Room 203, Hammersmith Town Hall
2	GLA Seminar Invitation	David Bays x 2628	Committee Services Room 203, Hammersmith Town Hall
3	Reports to above meetings of Standards Committee	David Bays x 2628	Committee Services Room 203, Hammersmith Town Hall