

## **Standards Committee**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2013**

#### **Present:**

Independent Co-opted Members: Professor S Hardy – in the Chair  
Mrs A Isles

City Councillors: P Andrews, M Clayton, G Evans A Taylor, and A Trotman  
Ringway Parish Council - Councillor C O'Donovan

Also present in their capacity as Independent Persons: Mrs E Carmichael, Mr A Eastwood and Ms N Malik

#### **ST/13/04     Minutes**

#### **Decision**

To approve the minutes of the committee meeting held on 14 January 2013 as a correct record.

#### **ST/13/05     Refresh of the Code of Corporate Governance**

The Business Planning, Performance and Governance Lead introduced a report that outlined the proposed revisions to the Council's Code of Corporate Governance. The Code of Corporate Governance is a public statement setting out the governance standards that the Council will meet. The Code lists the Council's values and sets out the organisation's partnership governance standards. It also describes how the Council will ensure members and officers behave in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance; and the role of the Standards Committee in providing leadership in this area. The Council also produces an Annual Governance Statement that reports the extent to which the Code of Corporate Governance has been complied with.

Since the last time the Code was revised in 2010, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) has produced guidance about new governance issues affecting local authorities such as provisions in the Localism Act 2011 and the establishment of Health and Wellbeing Boards. The guidance also includes examples of good governance practices amongst local authorities in responding to these issues. CIPFA recommend that local authorities regularly review their Code of Corporate Governance. Manchester's Code has been amended to reflect the best practice highlighted in the guidance. The main changes were highlighted in section 2 of the report and the document had been made more concise with increased use of hyperlinks to background documents.

The Standards Committee was invited to consider the revised Code of Corporate Governance and to provide comments, particularly in relation to the committee's work programme and the ethical governance framework. The draft Code of Corporate Governance, revised to take into account comments from this committee, would be

considered by Audit Committee on 21 March 2013 prior to its submission as part of the Constitution to the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2013 for adoption.

In discussing the changes in the document, the Committee noted that the revised Code was more clearly written and easy to understand than the previous version. The Business Planning, Performance and Governance Lead agreed to circulate a word version of the Code which included the hyperlinks to background documents to Standards Committee members.

Members discussed whether the origin and development of the Council's policies could be more clearly set out in the revised Code. They agreed that information about the process by which the Council's policies were approved and adopted should be made more explicit within the Code, as this would demonstrate the strength of the Council's existing governance arrangements. An example of whether the Council's "m people" approach had been endorsed by trade unions before it was adopted by Council was given.

### **Decision**

1. To note the revised changes to the Code of Corporate Governance.
2. To recommend that the draft Code of Corporate Governance should be amended to provide the specific information about the process by which Council policies were approved and adopted

### **ST/13/06 Update on Constitutional Protocols**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer summarised a report which informed the Committee about the proposed revisions to the following existing protocols contained within the Council's constitution:

- (i) the Planning Protocol for Members and Officers (Part 6, Section B of the Council Constitution);
- (ii) the Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Members;
- (iii) the guidance for local investigation of allegations that a member of Manchester City Council has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct for Members.

The Planning Protocol has been updated to reflect changes introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and the revised Code of Conduct for Members that was adopted by the Council in July 2012, particularly in relation to the disclosure of pecuniary interests. The changes also reflect the decision of Standards Committee on the 14 January 2013 that members who have a disclosable pecuniary interest can apply to the monitoring officer for dispensation to allow them to participate in discussions about planning matters in which they have an interest, as long as the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same reason. Another change enabled planning applications by officers or members to which there were no objections to be considered by the Head of Planning under delegated powers.

The Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Members has been updated to take account of the revised Code of Conduct for Members that was adopted by the Council in July 2012. The Committee endorsed these changes.

The Council's Procedure for Local Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct of Members has been updated to reflect the new role the "Independent Person" that the Council is required to appoint by the Localism Act 2011. The revised guidance sets out the procedure that will be followed where the Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person have determined that a complaint merits investigation.

The Planning Protocol and the Gifts and Hospitality Protocol would be considered at the Annual Meeting of Council in May as part of a report on revisions to the Council's constitution. The Standards Committee noted the report and endorsed the proposed changes.

### **Decision**

To endorse the proposed changes to the following existing protocols contained within the Council's constitution:

1. the Planning Protocol for Members and Officers
2. the Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Members;
3. the guidance for local investigation of allegations that a member of Manchester City Council has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct for Members.

### **ST/13/07 Oral Update on Complaints Against Members**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer provided an oral update on the handling of complaints against councillors. Six complaints had been received since the new arrangements came into operation. Of these, one has been withdrawn, four were rejected and one was still under consideration.