

CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday, 1 August 2024

Present: Councillor T Cox (Chair)

Councillors G Bennett T Laing
P Gilchrist T Murphy
J Grier M Sullivan

In attendance: A Lloyd-Price
J McCosh

Apologies C Jones
G Kerr

1 **NOMINATION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Director of Law and Corporate Services welcomed members of the Constitution and Standards Committee to the meeting and sought nominations for the role of Chair of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

It was moved by Councillor Tom Laing and seconded by Councillor Gary Bennett that Councillor Tony Cox be appointed Chair.

No other nominations were received.

Resolved – That Councillor Tony Cox be appointed as Chair of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

The Chair invited nominations for the role of Vice-Chair of the Constitution and Standards Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

It was moved by Councillor Tom Laing and seconded by Councillor Mike Sullivan that Councillor Phil Gilchrist be appointed Vice-Chair.

No other nominations were received.

Resolved: That Councillor Phil Gilchrist be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Grahame Kerr and Chris Jones, Independent Persons to the Committee.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they are.

No declarations were made.

4 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2024 be agreed.

5 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

There had been one Member Question received in advance of the meeting.

Councillor Judith Grier was invited to present her question to the committee. She raised concerns regarding reporting of environmental implications within committee reports, referring to a report previously taken to both the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee and the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee. She asked that a review of the report template be included within the Committee's work plan.

The Chair responded to the question. He said that he was happy to refer this matter to the Governance Working Group to undertake a review of the report template and the guidance notes for officers to ensure it was fit for purpose. He also said that the item which instigated this question was more of an operational matter, and would ask for feedback from the Chair and Spokes of the Environment Committee to feed into the review.

A discussion was raised around the procedure of receiving questions to the Committee.

6 **MEMBERS SUPPORT STEERING GROUP ANNUAL REPORT MAY 2023 - APRIL 2024**

The Head of Democratic and Member Services presented the report of the Director of Law and Corporate Services, which appraised Members of the work of the Member Support Steering Group during the 2023/24 municipal year and ongoing planned work of the group.

The Head of Democratic and Member Services added that the Member Support Steering Group had been meeting regularly since 2021, with a lot of work invested by officers in member development. He discussed the

formation of the Member Support team over the last year and that he had received good feedback from all political groups on the working arrangements and the implementation of the first year of the member learning and development strategy.

He highlighted section 3.12 of the report to Members, which discussed results of the member induction survey, and was pleased at the positive feedback. This point was reiterated by the Chair, who commended officers for the improvements in the induction and training programme.

Members raised questions and comments over additional IT training, the escalation process on the Councillor Portal, carbon literacy and other useful training, and ways to contact officers. Members also raised their thanks for the work of officers in supporting and training members.

Resolved: That the Committee endorse the report.

7 SUMMARY OF STANDARDS COMPLAINTS

The Head of Legal Services presented the report of the Director of Law and Corporate Services, which provided Members with a summary of Standards complaints received under the Members' Code of Conduct and Protocol for dealing with complaints against Members between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024. She added that due to the need to maintain confidentiality she was not able to provide more specific detailed information about any of the individual complaints.

Overall within the period covered in the report, there had been 39 complaints on the conduct of seven members, with 34 different complainants. Four complaints had been submitted by Members regarding other Members, and one complaint had been referred for formal investigation.

Members raised questions and comments on the internal timescales followed by officers to resolve complaints, whether themes or patterns had been identified within the complaints and whether Members had understood and felt supported throughout the process. One member asked whether investigations would resume if a councillor were to be re-elected to the council.

It was mentioned by Members that there had not been a complaint referred to a Standards Panel for some time, which was positive. This point was reiterated by the Director of Law and Corporate Services. She added that officers were mindful of patterns and trends and these would be picked up in training and informal discussions with Members.

Resolved: That the Committee note the summary of Standards complaints.

8

APPOINTMENT OF PANELS, STATUTORY / ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES 2024/25

The Director of Law and Corporate Services presented the report, which was to enable the Committee to review the continuing need for various panels, statutory/advisory committees and working parties, and to appoint members and named deputies to service on those that are to be retained in 2024/25.

Members discussed the size of the two working groups, and agreed to retain the size of seven members. The Governance Working Group would retain its membership of all seven members of the Committee, and the Member Support Steering Group would be made up of any Member interested in being a member of that group.

Resolved: To authorise the Monitoring Officer as proper officer to carry out the wishes of the Group Leaders in allocating Members to membership of the statutory and advisory committees listed in the report, and to appoint those Members with effect from the date at which the proper officer is advised of the names of such Members.

9

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION & ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Head of Democratic and Member Services presented the report of the Director of Law and Corporate Services, which requested the Constitution and Standards Committee to give consideration to: recommending to Council that Standing Order 10.7, in respect to public questions, be amended so that no public question exceeds 100 words; arrangements for the holding of Committee Meetings in Wallasey Town Hall; noting the role of Facilities Management, Community Patrol and security officers in respect to the running of Council and Committee Meetings in Wallasey Town Hall; and requesting the Member Support Steering Group undertake a review of member safety.

A Member asked a question in respect to the proposed addition to the Mayor/Chair's script in explaining to the public why questions may be rejected, as well as whether there was flexibility in the limit of public questions to 100 words. There were also questions over the arrangements for access and egress of members of the public into Wallasey Town Hall, and whether the word limit on public questions would apply to supplementary questions.

Members expressed their thanks for the work of officers in supporting Members and for their efficient work in moving all Committee Meetings to Wallasey Town Hall.

The motion in relation to Recommendation One was put to a vote and was carried (6:1). Recommendations Two and Three were agreed by assent. It was therefore -

Resolved: The Constitution and Standards Committee agreed:

- 1. That Council be recommended to amend Standing Order 10.7 as detailed at section 3.2 of the report.**
- 2. That the revised arrangements for Committee Meetings for the 2024/25 municipal year be noted.**
- 3. That the Head of Democratic and Member Services, in consultation with the Member Support Steering Group, undertakes a review of the arrangements for Member safety and submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee.**

10 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Director of Law and Corporate Services presented the report, which provided the recommendations of the Health and Wellbeing Board in respect of its membership. She highlighted to members that page 81 of the agenda pack showed the recommend changes.

Members raised questions around those organisations contacted in regards to the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board and their responses. They also queried the membership of councillors and whether this list was up to date.

Resolved: That Council be recommended to amend the Constitution as detailed in Appendix 6 of the report.