

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCILLOR CONDUCT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 25 JUNE 2013**

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT Yasemin Brett, Tom Waterhouse, Tahsin Ibrahim, Michael Rye OBE, Christine Chamberlain (Independent Member) and Lawrence Greenberg (Standards Committee)

OFFICERS: John Austin (Assistant Director - Corporate Governance)
Penelope Williams (Secretary)

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WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting especially Councillor Ibrahim as he was attending his first meeting of the Committee. Apologies for absence were received from Asmat Hussain (Assistant Director Legal Services).

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DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

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COUNCILLOR CONDUCT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

The Committee received a draft copy of the Committee's Annual Report for 2012/13.

NOTED

1. There was some discussion in reference to the paragraph on the new complaints process (5.7 in the report) about how complaints could best be handled. It was suggested that the complaints process could be changed to include the following sentence:

"The Monitoring Officer has the discretion to inform the relevant chief whip of a complaint or run of complaints where it is in the interests of the member being complained about."

2. The Monitoring Officer was already providing a quarterly update informing the Committee about the complaints received.
3. Christine Chamberlain thought that it was important to maintain the integrity of the process and to ensure that the committee's distance from the process was maintained.

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4. More research would be carried out to find out what other borough's do and a further report on the complaints process brought back to the next meeting of the committee.

AGREED that the annual report for 2013/14 be approved by the Committee and be referred to Council.

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ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON

John Austin, Monitoring Officer, updated the Committee on the arrangements to recruit an Independent Person to replace Lawrence Greenberg, whose term of office came to an end on 30 June 2013.

- Information had been placed on the Council Website together with advertisements in the Enfield Independent and Enfield Gazette and Advertiser. Emails have also been circulated to voluntary sector groups across the borough.
- The closing date has been agreed as 31 July 2013, to allow the voluntary sector enough time to disseminate the information among their members.

NOTED

1. The Chair gave her thanks to Lawrence Greenberg who had provided sterling support to the Council for a long time which was much appreciated.
2. John Austin echoed these comments saying that he had personally very much appreciated the sound support he had received from Lawrence over the past years both as an Independent Person and as Chair of the Standards Committee.
3. Lawrence's contribution will be formally recognised, by the Mayor at the next meeting of the full Council.
4. The Vice Chair said that the Opposition had appreciated the huge difference that Lawrence had made, being well respected by both sides and creating confidence in the Council's standards regime. His independence had ensured that there was trust in the system when a complaint came in.
5. Lawrence Greenberg thanked everyone for their comments and said that he had enjoyed working with such a great bunch of people.

AGREED that the Interviews for the new Independent Person would be held at the next meeting of the Councillor Conduct Committee in September.

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WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

The Committee received a copy of the draft work programme for 2013/14. This could change as the year progressed.

NOTED

1. John Austin was planning to brief Groups on the Code of Conduct.
2. Suggestions for training included reminding members of the importance of being aware of the dangers of including information on the internet and in social media, in blogs, posts and tweets which could bring the office of councillor into disrepute.
3. Lawrence Greenberg felt that one should assume that anything said on social media will end up in the newspapers on the following day.
4. Training should be carried out both for existing councillors and as a core part of the induction for new councillors, after the council elections in May 2014. It was felt this training should be mandatory.
5. It was felt that it would also be useful to cover information governance issues including the classification of information, data protection and computer training.

AGREED

1. That John Austin would bring back proposals for member training, to a future meeting of the Committee.
2. To approve the work programme for 2013/14.

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MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 2 MAY 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NOTED the dates agreed for future meetings of the Committee:

- Thursday 5 September 2013
- Tuesday 3 December 2013
- Tuesday 25 March 2013

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EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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AGREED to pass a resolution under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 excluding the press and public from the meeting for the following item (Complaint Against Councillor - Update) moved from the Part 1 to Part 2 agenda on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 (information relating to an individual) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information Variation Order 2006).

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COUNCILLOR COMPLAINTS

John Austin, Monitoring Officer, reported on the complaints he was dealing with:

- No further information has been received on the complaint being investigated by the Police and Criminal Prosecution Service, despite many enquiries.
- A complaint against a councillor about an article in the press continued to be investigated by an external investigator, appointed from a panel of solicitors held by Legal.
- There had been two to three complaints around an issue that occurred at the Planning Committee in March 2013. The allegations have been investigated and the councillor concerned spoken to. The councillor has indicated that they felt that they had been misunderstood, but are willing to apologise. A response from the complainants to the offer of an apology is awaited.
- A complaint had been received from a resident stating that they had been misled by a councillor, but there was no written evidence. This had been discussed with an Independent Person and it had been agreed that unless any written evidence could be provided no further action should be taken.
- Two complaints one from each party had been received that the other political party had included council email and phone details in party political leaflets. The Monitoring Officer had written to all concerned.