

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCILLOR CONDUCT COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY, 16 JULY 2015**

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT Claire Stewart, Elaine Hayward, Donald McGowan and Joanne Laban

Independent Persons: Christine Chamberlain and Sarah Jewell

OFFICERS: Asmat Hussain (Assistant Director Legal and Governance)
Penelope Williams (Secretary)

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WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies for absence.

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DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

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MEDIA RELATIONS FOR COUNCILLORS

The Committee received for information a copy of the extract from the 2014 Members Handbook concerning press and communications.

David Greely, Corporate Communications Manager, gave a short presentation on Media and Social Media for Councillors. Copies of the slides are attached to the agenda. He highlighted the following:

- All code of conduct principles apply when working with the media.
- The Communications Team do not formally advise individual ward councillors, they work with the executive and scrutiny leads.
- There are risks with using social media, but the benefits outweighed the risks.
- When using social media members should be clear about their messages, stick to three per communication and keep reiterating, share and credit information and have an idea about what they want to achieve. Act as a person, not a slogan or a machine, and avoid getting angry. When chatting on line they need to be wary of what they are saying and aware that things can be picked up and used in ways they had not intended.
- The LGA website has some very useful information on the use of social media. Links would be sent round to members.

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- David Greely offered to speak at a future training session for members, if it would be helpful.

AGREED to note the information provided.

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CHANGE IN THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

Members agreed to change to the order of items considered at the meeting. Item 6 was brought forward for consideration after item 4. The minutes reflect the order on the published agenda.

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WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16

The Committee received a draft copy of the work programme grid for 2015-16.

NOTED

1. The item on treating would be removed from the work programme as it was not felt to be appropriate to Enfield.
2. A report on the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) had been drafted and approved by the Council Management Board. This would be brought to the Committee for consideration at the next meeting.

AGREED to adopt the work programme for 2015-16 as received with the addition of the above amendments.

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CHANGES TO THE CODE OF CONDUCT ON THE DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

NOTED

1. The Committee had received a report at the last meeting concerning changes to the Councillor Code of Conduct on who the declaration of disclosable pecuniary interests, whether it should include interests relating "family members or persons with whom you have a close association or personal relationship" which was beyond the statutory minimum.
2. Councillor Elaine Hayward reported that she had spoken to the Conservative Group and that there had been a mixed response as to whether the remits should change. Some were in favour, some felt that it should remain as it was.
3. There was a concern that not all members were disclosing matters that related to other family members and that perhaps more training was needed on this.
4. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to define "close association", but advice could be sought from the Monitoring Officer.

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5. Councillor Claire Stewart reported that the Labour Group had also discussed the possible change but felt that it came back to the public perception "Would a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, reasonably regard your interest as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest?" Considering this they felt that it would be better to leave the code as it was.
6. The use of the term "kinship" was also discussed. It was felt that this was covered by the term "close associate" and it was up to each individual to judge whether they thought that they needed to declare an interest.
7. This issue will be kept under annual review.

AGREED that the code should remain as it was.

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INTERNET AND EMAIL USAGE POLICY FOR COUNCILLORS

The Committee received for information a copy of the Members Information Security Policy.

Mohi Nowaz, Corporate Systems Assurance Manager, advised members that:

- The Members Information Security Policy had been written with a view to adding to it when it became clear what more information and guidance would be required.
- The ipads which most councillors had were not part of the council network and so there were difficulties monitoring the activity on them.

NOTED

1. There was a full email and internet policy for staff which could be adapted for members.
2. Councillors should use their council email for Council business.
3. All members had signed the Members Information Security Policy, when they received their IT equipment last year.
4. The suggestion that the Member's Information Security Policy be updated to include reference to the Code of Conduct and including clear guidelines and expectations. The words "acting professionally should be followed by "in accordance with the Code of Conduct".
5. Misuse of the Council's IT equipment would be covered by the Code of Conduct. Any criminal offence could be picked up during routine maintenance and would be reported to the police.

AGREED that changes would be made to the Member and Information Security Policy to include reference to the Code of Conduct. Mohi Nowaz would bring a revised version back to the next meeting in September.

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GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

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The Committee received an annual report from the Monitoring Officer updating members on the entries in the gifts and hospitality register for 2015-16 and including a guidance note on the process.

Asmat Hussain, the Monitoring Officer presented the report to the Committee.

NOTED

1. There had been a slight increase on the amount of gifts and hospitality registered from 2013/14 to 2014/15. The amounts declared in Enfield were lower than other similar boroughs.
2. Declarations mainly involved meals or galas.
3. The gifts and hospitality register is open to public inspection.
4. It was felt that the sentence "Would I have been given this if I had not been a councillor?" was key to understanding whether or not something should be declared.
5. If a member was being personally targeted, for their position of influence, it was felt that this should be declared.
6. The timing – that notification must be given within 28 days - should be included in the guidance note and enlarged on the form.
7. A report to the Councillor Conduct Committee would be made annually.
8. The guidance note would be added to the Member's Portal.

AGREED

1. To adopt the guidance note as set out in Appendix 1 of the report with the above amendments.
2. To note the data for the period 2014-15.

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DISPENSATIONS

The Committee received an annual report from the Monitoring Officer updating them on the dispensations granted during 2014-15.

NOTED

1. This would in future be reported to the Committee annually.
2. There was only one dispensation granted in 2014-15 relating to opposition priority business.

AGREED to note that the Monitoring Officer had granted one dispensation to councillors at the Council meeting held on Wednesday 25 March 2015, which allowed all of them to participate in the debate and decision on the Opposition Priority Business item: the cost of temporary accommodation and what can be done about it.

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UPDATE ON CURRENT COMPLAINTS

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The Committee received a verbal update from the Monitoring Officer on the councillor complaints currently being considered.

Asmat Hussain, Monitoring Officer, reported that there were no complaints to report.

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2015 were received and agreed as a correct record.

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the dates agreed for future meetings of the Committee:

- Thursday 17 September 2015
- Wednesday 2 December 2015
- Thursday 24 March 2016