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## REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

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### MEETING HELD ON 8 DECEMBER 2009

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Chairman:	* The Right Revd Peter Broadbent	
Councillors:	* Husain Akhtar	* Paul Osborn (1)
	* B E Gate	* M Rizvi
	* Joyce Nickolay	* Jeremy Zeid (3)
	* Asad Omar	
Independent Persons:	* Ms Sheila Darr	Dr J Kirkland

\* Denotes Member present  
(1) and (3) Denote category of Reserve Member

#### **PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **RECOMMENDATION I - Members' Access to Information - Guidance and Protocol**

The Committee considered a report which provided revised guidance and protocols in relation to Members' Access to Information. Members commented that generally the revised guidance was helpful and sufficiently clear to understand.

A Member commented that, in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services, he had some involvement in the preparation of the document. He explained that a key aspect of the revised guidance was that if a request for exempt information was not granted by officers, a Member could refer the request to the Chairman of the Standards Committee. This was an important governance issue as it meant an independent person acted as an arbitrator, thus providing transparency.

The Committee further considered that the protocol should include reference for a request to be referred to the Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee, in circumstances where the Chairman was unavailable. This would ensure that there was a contingency plan if the Chairman was unavailable whilst maintaining the level of transparency sought.

##### **Resolved to RECOMMEND:**

That (1) a further provision at paragraph 26 be inserted into the guidance and protocol to ensure that the Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee considers referred requests for information, in circumstances where the Chairman is unavailable;

(2) Council be requested to approve the revised Members' Access to Information – Guidance and Protocol for inclusion in the Constitution.

##### **RECOMMENDATION II - Protocol on Gifts and Hospitality**

The Committee considered a report which set out a draft protocol on gifts and hospitality. In response to questions raised by Members, an officer explained that:

- the threshold of registering gifts and hospitality with an estimated value of £25 or more, applied at the time of receipt;
- the term 'short period' was interpreted by a common sense approach;
- it was in Members' best interest to ensure that they fully registered gifts and hospitality to ensure protection.

The Committee agreed an amendment to paragraph 4.1 in that the term 'It is acceptable' be altered to read 'It is normal'. A Member commented that serving Mayors received a wealth of gifts during their term, which were then stored in the Mayor's office. Many gifts were of no consequential value but had sentimental value to past Mayors. It was suggested that consideration be given to the possibility that some of these gifts being passed on to past Mayors at the end of their terms. Officers undertook to investigate this further.

**Resolved to RECOMMEND:**

That (1) an amendment be made to paragraph 4.1 to replace the words 'It is acceptable' to 'It is normal';

(2) Council be requested to approve the revised Protocol on Gifts and Hospitality for inclusion in the Constitution.

**PART II - MINUTES**134. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

**RESOLVED:** To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-

Ordinary Member

Councillor Lurline Champagne  
Councillor Mark Versallion

Reserve Member

Councillor Paul Osborn  
Councillor Jeremy Zeid

135. **Declarations of Interest:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that the following interests were declared:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
9. Application for Dispensation	Councillor Husain Akhtar	Prejudicial interest in that Councillor Akhtar was the applicant for the dispensation. Councillor Akhtar left the room during the discussion and decision making on this item.

136. **Minutes:**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2009 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

137. **Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting.

138. **Members' Access to Information - Guidance and Protocol:**

(See Recommendation I).

139. **Protocol on Gifts and Hospitality:**

(See Recommendation II).

140. **Application for Dispensation:**

In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the Committee received a report, which was admitted late to the agenda to ensure that an application for dispensation was granted at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Committee considered the application for dispensation and the associated reasons provided by the applicant. The Committee assessed these in relation to the grounds identified by the Standards Committee (Further Provisions)(England) Regulations 2009 and concluded that these were not satisfied. Therefore the application could not be granted.

Following issues raised by Members, officers undertook to investigate models for certain Committees, Advisory Panels and Consultative Forums to ensure compliance with statutory and other requirements whilst ensuring that Members, with possible interests, were able to sit on a particular body.

**RESOLVED:** That the application for dispensation not be granted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.42 pm).

(Signed) THE RIGHT REVD PETER BROADBENT  
Chairman