

# Subject: Chief Officer Review of the Registration of Interests and of Gifts and Hospitality

Report to: GLA Oversight Committee

Report of: Chief Officer

Date: 3 September 2019

This report will be considered in public

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 The Chief Officer has been asked by the Members of the London Assembly's GLA Oversight Committee to review the GLA's approach to the registration of interests and of gifts and hospitality.
- 1.2 This report sets out the revised scope of that review and provides an update on progress and future work planned. The Chief Officer welcomes comments on this report from Members.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Committee notes this progress report on the Chief Officer's review of the registration of interests and of gifts and hospitality.**

## 3. Background

- 3.1 At the 1 July 2019 meeting of the GLA Oversight Committee, Members requested that the Chief Officer review the GLA's approach to the registration of interests and of gifts and hospitality by officers.
- 3.2 At the 16 July 2019 meeting of the GLA Oversight Committee, Members provided comments on the scope of the review. As a result, the scope of the review is updated as follows:

### **Scope of the review: Registration and declarations of interest**

- How the Code of Ethics and Standards for Staff deals with the registration of interests and whether any changes are required to the Code in light of this review;
- The extent to which GLA staff induction training and the governance e-learning module cover the registration of interests and whether more could be done in this regard;
- The scope for developing tailored guidance for senior staff on their registration of interests, including:
  - (i) practical examples of the different type of interests which are likely to arise for senior staff
  - (ii) implications for decision-making
  - (iii) procurement implications
  - (iv) implications for any other processes which support formal decision-making;

- How the GLA's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the various directorate management teams (DMTs) cover the issue of the registration of interests, particularly in relation to new recruits;
- How the GLA's SLT and the various DMTs cover the ongoing declaration of interests and how interests are acted upon as part of everyday GLA business. This will include which GLA officer meetings and forums are likely to require a standing agenda item on the registration of interests and how that is being – or should be – conducted;
- How frequently, and in what format, refresher training is provided to long-standing employees;
- The arrangements in place for seconded-in staff as to their registration of interests;
- The arrangements in place to address GLA companies such as GLAP; and
- Consideration as to whether there is scope to improve the process and/or guidance for registration and declaration of interests by elected Members.

### **Scope of the review: Declaration and registration of gifts and hospitality**

- The guidance and training provided to staff as to their registration of gifts and hospitality;
- The processes whereby staff register gifts and hospitality;
- The public reporting of gifts and hospitality which have been registered by senior staff; and
- Consideration as to whether there is scope to improve the process and/or guidance for declaration of gifts and hospitality by elected Members.

## **4. Issues for consideration**

### **Update on progress to date**

- 4.1 The team leading on this review, led by the Chief Officer and comprising the Monitoring Officer, the Assistant Director of Finance & Governance and the Assistant Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development, have considered how best to take forward this review and have agreed the following five workstreams:
- Audit;
  - Governance;
  - Human Resources;
  - Monitoring Officer; and
  - Directorate Management Team.
- 4.2 Underpinning the entire work programme is the notion of sharing and implementing good practice not just within the GLA but across the entire GLA Group. The Legal and Committee teams (both of which are shared services working across the Group) are playing a key role in ensuring that functional bodies contribute to the workstreams underway and follow the good practice emerging from them.
- 4.3 The key activities to be conducted in each workstream are laid out overleaf. Many are already underway:

## **I. Audit workstream**

- Review of previous audit reports to ensure that any outstanding recommendations regarding Gifts and Hospitality have been implemented.
- Provision of a list of key controls which are expected within the Gifts and Hospitality and Registration of Interest systems.
  - An auditor has been allocated to this work and an initial document review has already been undertaken. The above work will be completed in early September.
- Any recommendations from the activities outlined above are to be distributed across the workstreams below for implementation.
- A review of processes implemented following the review to ensure that they are operating effectively. It is anticipated that this will be carried out in January or February.

## **II. Governance workstream**

- Review of the GLA staff induction training and the governance e-learning module to update and improve the information provided regarding registration and ongoing declaration of interests and registration of gifts and hospitality.
- The development of mandatory refresher training for staff regarding declarations of interests and gifts and hospitality.
- The development of tailored guidance for senior staff on their registration of interests, including:
  - (i) practical examples of the different type of interests which are likely to arise for senior staff
  - (ii) implications for decision-making
  - (iii) procurement implications
  - (iv) implications for any other processes which support formal decision-making.
- The development of guidance for seconded-in staff on their registration of interests.
- A review of the arrangements in place to address GLA companies such as GLAP; the identification of recommendations and plans for implementation.
  - Staff resource has been allocated to support all of this work and the work is now underway.
  - With immediate effect, the Governance team is reviewing all new draft decision forms to ensure that explicit commentary is provided regarding potential conflicts of interest where relevant. Work is also underway to consider changes to the decision form templates and guidance in this regard.

## **III. Human Resources workstream**

- Review and update of the Code of Ethics and Standards for Staff with regard to declaration and registration of interests (noting that this will require separate consultation with Unison, the Mayor and the London Assembly). At the same time consideration will be given as to whether other elements of this Code would benefit from an update.
  - It is clear that the Code of Conduct for Members sets out more extensive provisions than the Code of Ethics and Standards for Staff. The Monitoring Officer has now commenced discussions with TfL Legal with a view to updating this.
- We will also consider whether any further HR policies require updating in light of this.

#### **IV. Monitoring Officer workstream**

- Digital development will be undertaken to enable Members and staff to complete their Register of Interests online, replacing the current paper-based system. The way in which information is displayed will also be reviewed and improved in line with current digital accessibility standards.
- Digital development will be undertaken to enable staff to register gifts and hospitality online, replacing the current paper-based system. This system is already in place for Assembly Members, but development will be required to enable this for staff whose declarations must be approved by an Executive Director, the Chief Officer or the Chief of Staff.
  - Scoping of the above two areas of development is now underway.
- A review of the current Gifts and Hospitality Policy and Procedure to identify improvements to increase transparency. By way of example, areas under consideration include the following:
  - Ending corporate declarations and thereby ensure that elected Members and staff complete individual personal declarations in all cases.
  - Changes to the Foreign Travel Approval process have been made to ensure any travel funded by an external organisation triggers the completion of a G&H form.
  - A communication has been sent to all members of the Senior Management Team to remind them that staff should submit G&H requests in advance of acceptance. Further communication on this is planned as part of this work.
- All senior staff will have a 'person page' containing all pertinent transparency information, including their Register of Interests and declarations of gifts and hospitality.
  - The digital development required to support this has already been completed and a data validation exercise is now being carried out. These pages will go 'live' in September.
- The three current versions of the Planning Code of Conduct (there is one for Members, one for individuals with Delegated Authority, and one for staff) will be updated with a view to creating a clear, single consolidated version. This will be subject to separate consultation with the Mayor, the GLA Oversight Committee and the Planning Committee and will be ratified via a Mayoral Decision and at a full London Assembly Plenary meeting.
  - The drafting of this document is complete and will be tabled at Planning Committee in September.
- Review the content and frequency of updates made by the Monitoring Officer to the Audit Panel with a view to considering whether more frequent or detailed updates are required.
  - Views will be sought from Audit Panel at the meeting on 16 October.

#### **V. Directorate Management Team workstream**

- All Executive Directors and the Chief Officer will be asked to review and produce recommendations on how they propose to cover the ongoing declaration of interests and how interests are acted upon as part of everyday GLA business. This will be done through their Directorate Management Teams so that all senior staff are engaged in the process.
- This will include which GLA officer meetings and forums are likely to require a standing agenda item on the registration of interests and how that should be conducted.
  - By way of example, the Collaboration Board now has implemented this standing item as of September 2019.

- This workstream will also consider how this is addressed in relation to new recruits and secondees.
  - The above work will take place during September; initial discussions are underway within the Corporate Management Team.
- The Directorate Management Teams will also be asked to review and feed into the proposed new guidance (included in the Governance workstream).
- The Assembly Secretariat has been asked to review the current operations for the declaration of interests in London Assembly statutory meetings to consider if the current model can be improved upon.

## Timetable

- 4.4 Workstream timings are currently estimated and further scoping work is required to fully determine timescales associated with the HR and Monitoring Officer workstreams.

Workstream	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Audit						
Governance						
HR						
Monitoring Officer						
Directorates						

- 4.5 A further update on this work will be brought to the October meeting of GLA Oversight Committee.

## 5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Monitoring Officer (on behalf of the Chief Officer and Assistant Directors of Finance & Governance and HR & OD) wrote to all Assembly Members on 2 August 2019 to set out the above scope of the review and to request input and views on potential improvements to the processes and guidance related to Members' registration and declaration of interests and declaration of gifts and hospitality. Given this work is still ongoing, the opportunity to meet with the team conducting the review remains open to all Members. Comments are also welcomed in writing or verbally outside of this meeting. The Chief of Staff has also been asked to provide input to this Review on behalf of the Mayor.
- 5.2 The Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC) Directorate of Audit Risk and Assurance who are the GLA's internal auditors have been notified of this review and it has been agreed that they will provide control advice on the Gifts and Hospitality and Registration of Interest processes.

## **6. Legal implications**

6.1 Under the GLA's current Code of Ethics and Standards for Staff ("the Code"):

### "2.5 Declaration of Interests

- (a) Staff who have an interest whether financial or otherwise, or if any person related to them or with whom they have a close personal relationship, has any interest in any organisation which has any business dealings with the Authority, are required to disclose such interests immediately and ensure that the details are recorded in the Authority's Register of Interests.
- (b) Staff must make a declaration of interest on any issue on which they are advising the Mayor or Assembly which affects an interest held by them, or any person related to them or with whom they have a close personal relationship whether financial or otherwise, and ensure that the details are recorded in the Authority's Register of Interests. The register of declarations of interests is maintained in the office of the Monitoring Officer.
- (c) To ensure openness and transparency, declarations of interest may be published on the GLA's website.

### 2.13. Gifts and Hospitality

- (a) Offers of hospitality must be treated with caution whenever any suggestion of improper influence could arise. To prevent any improper behaviour, or suggestion of improper behaviour arising staff must take great care when hospitality is offered. Hospitality accepted should not be extravagant and nor should it be taken from the same client/individual on a frequent basis.
- (b) If staff are in doubt about whether hospitality offered can be accepted advice should be sought from the relevant Director. Staff must register receipt of any hospitality. The hospitality register is maintained in the office of the Monitoring Officer.
- (c) To ensure openness and transparency, declarations of gifts and hospitality may be published on the GLA's website."

6.2 It is noted above that the Chief Officer has been asked by the Members of the London Assembly's GLA Oversight Committee to review the GLA's approach to the registration of interests and of gifts and hospitality by GLA officers, and that work on this request has begun. The proposals and actions described above, including in particular those in respect of review of the content and application of, and education in respect of, the relevant parts of the Code, the specific review of the three versions of the Planning Code of Conduct, the definitions of scope and proposed workstreams, and consultation, appear proper and consistent with that request.

## **7. Financial implications**

7.1 There are no specific financial implications arising at this stage. Any costs arising from implementing the recommendations made as part of the review will be flagged and budgeted for in due course.

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**List of appendices to this report:**

None.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

List of Background Papers:

[GLA Oversight paper 16 July 2019](#)

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