

At a Meeting of the Standards Committee held at the County Hall, Durham on Thursday 21 May 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT:

Mrs D Winter in the Chair

Members of Standards Committee

Councillors J Armstrong, A Bainbridge, E Bell, C Carr, P Charlton, G Holland, P Jopling, J Shiell, D Southwell, and M Williams;
Mr Argyle, Mr Balls, Mrs Balmer, Mrs Naples; and
Councillors Day, Duggan, Liversidge and Marr.

Other Members

Councillors Blakey, Gray, B Myers and Stradling.
Mr Jim Armstrong, Mr W Ault, Mr J Hitchman and Mr P Thompson

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Goyns, Mr T Batson, Mrs E Davies and Mrs Khan-Willis

A1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor D Liversidge, in respect of Minute B9, in her capacity as a member of Haswell Parish Council.

A3 Amendments to Standards Committee Procedures

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer asking for approval to certain minor amendments which are required to the Council's existing procedures for handling Code of Conduct complaints (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:-

That the amendments to the Council's procedures for assessment investigation and determination of complaints be approved.

A4 Complaints Handling for the period January to March 2009

The Committee noted a report from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer providing details of complaints handling during the period January to March 2009 (for copy see file of Minutes).

In the final quarter of 2008/09, 68 complaints had been received, averaging 22 per month. 88% of complaints were acknowledged within target and 82% were resolved within target. Poor service and staff conduct continued to account for the majority of complaints. 76 compliments had been received during the same quarter.

Resolved:-

That the report be noted.

A5 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the said Act.

B6 Code of Conduct Complaints inherited from the former District Councils

The Committee considered a report Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer detailing all complaints made to predecessor Councils that had not been concluded by 31 March 2009, identifying the stage reached for each case (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:-

That the information contained within the report be noted and that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer be authorised to proceed with the complaints in accordance with the Transitional Regulations.

B7 Complaint against three Members of Ferryhill Town Council

The Committee considered a report Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer about a complaint received against three members of Ferryhill Town Council (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:-

That the Investigating Officer's report be accepted.

B8 Complaint against a Member of Haswell Parish Council

The Committee considered a report Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer about a complaint received against a member of Haswell Parish Council (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:-

That the Investigating Officer's report be accepted.

B9 Request for Deferral of Hearing

The Committee considered a report Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer requested a deferral to a hearing as the defendant is unfit to attend (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:-

That the hearing be deferred for a period of one month subject to medical information being supplied.

B10 Review of Completed Complaints

Members of the Committee inspected a sample of completed complaint files for the review period in question.