

City of Durham

At a Special Meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held in the Town Hall, Durham, on Monday 19th February 2007 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Mr B.R.J. Ingleby (in the Chair)
and Councillors Gibbon, Moderate, and Simpson (City Council Members),
and Councillor C.W. Beswick (Parish Council Member)
and Mr. D Hollingworth (Independent Member)

Also Present: Councillor Marsden, Ms Randle of Steel & Ramash Solicitors, Mrs L. Blackie (Monitoring Officer), Mrs C. Greenlay (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mrs C. Prest, Mr & Mrs Barber, and Mr M. Summers.

498. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor McDonnell.

499. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Gibbon and Simpson both declared an interest in the business to be discussed and excused themselves from sitting as members of the panel.

500. COMPLAINT TO THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND – REF: SBE 15697.06

In the light of members of the Public and Press attending the meeting, the Committee first considered whether the press and public should be excluded from all or part of the hearing. Having consulted the parties to the hearing it was:-

Resolved: That the press and public should not be excused from the hearing but that they should only receive an anonymised version of the investigating officers report to protect confidential information, and that the parties to the hearing should not disclose any confidential material during the progress of the hearing.

Mr Barber had complained to the Standards Board for England, alleging that Councillor Marsden, a member of the City Council's Appeals Panel, had failed to declare a prejudicial interest at a meeting of the Appeals Panel held on 26th May, 2006, and thereby breached the Council's Code of Conduct.

The complaint was referred by the Standards Board to the City Council for a local investigation. The investigation was carried out by Mrs Catherine Prest, former Monitoring Officer of Wear Valley District Council. She found that there was evidence that Councillor Marsden had failed to comply with the Council Code of Conduct.

The investigating officer's findings were considered by the Standards Committee who heard in person from Mrs Prest, Councillor Gibbon, Mrs Blackie, Councillor Marsden and Ms Randle. In accordance with the Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination) (Amendment) Regulations 2004, and it was:-

Resolved: (i) That Councillor Marsden had not failed to comply with the City Council's Code of Conduct.

(ii) That the Council's Code of Conduct should be reviewed.

The meeting terminated at 12.55 p.m.

Chairman