

Standards Committee

16 November 2006

Ethical Standards Training Event
26 September 2006
County Hall Durham



Report of Acting Director of Corporate Services

Background

1. An ethical standards training event was held in County hall on 26 September for County Councillors and Members of the Standards Committees of the Fire and Rescue and Police Authorities. Officers from Corporate Services and Internal Audit with a remit in relation to the ethical standards framework and corporate governance also attended the event.

The course facilitator was Peter Keith-Lucas from Bevan Brittan Solicitors and the course content was designed to increase general awareness of standards and conduct issues and also address those specific aspects Members had identified during Personal Development Plan interviews.

The Code of Conduct, Local Investigations and Hearings

2. The key points from the event are summarised below and a copy of the relevant documentation has been placed in the Members Resource Centre.

- Introduction. A review of the constraints on Members Conduct covered the issues of criminal and civil liability and how decisions of the Authority are invalidated.
- The Code of Conduct for Members. Peter Keith-Lucas examined in detail aspects of the Code, i.e. General Principles, Application, General Conduct Rules, Conflicts of Interest, Gifts and Hospitality, exemplified with Member Conduct cases heard by the Adjudication Panel. The remainder of the morning session was dedicated to consideration of the Code's requirements in relation to Members registration and declaration of interests.
- Local Investigations. The detailed stages of the Investigation process were reviewed ranging from receipt of the complaint, progress to either national or local investigation, how the investigation is conducted, concluding with the presentation of the report to Standards Committee for acceptance or decision to require a local hearing.
- Conduct of a Local Standards Hearing. The afternoon session concluded with consideration of the Authority's adopted procedures for the conduct of local Standards Hearings.

As a consequence of the event I am in the process of reviewing the thoroughness/robustness of our practices and procedures in relation to the registration and declaration of interests. Members will shortly be supplied with details of their current Register of Interests for review and I wish to reiterate my invitation to Members to contact me should they need further assistance or advice and guidance either in relation to the requirements of the Register or the Code of Conduct in general.

Conclusion

3. Members are asked to note the Report.

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