

**AT A JOINT MEETING** of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE OF DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL, COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY AND DURHAM POLICE AUTHORITY** held at the County Hall, Durham on **THURSDAY 8 MARCH 2007** at **9.30 A.M.**

**PRESENT:**

**Members of the Standards Committee for Durham County Council:**

Councillors Barker, Maddison, Stelling, Williams and Mrs D Winter, JP.

**Members of the Standards Committee for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority:**

Councillors Myers and W Ault.

**Durham Police Authority:**

Councillors Knox, Mrs C Blythe, Mrs E Davies, Mrs Khan-Willis and The Venerable J D Hodgson.

**Other Members:**

Councillors Armstrong, Douthwaite, N C Foster, Gray, Lethbridge, Manton, Nugent, Pendlebury and Wright.

**A1 Chairman of Joint Meeting**

**Resolved:**

That Mr E Marchant be elected as Chairman of the Joint Meeting.

**Mr E Marchant** in the Chair.

**A2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### A3 **Consultation on a Revised Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members**

The Joint Meeting considered a report of the Monitoring Officer detailing the consultation process in relation to the Revised Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members (for copy of report see file of Minutes).

The Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, published in October last year had announced the Government's intention to put in place a clearer, simpler and more proportionate Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members.

This announcement followed the Discussion Paper "*Conduct in England Local Government: The Future*" issued by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in December, 2005 which set out the Government's response to the recommendations made by the Standards Board for England for amendments to the Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members. These recommendations had followed extensive consultation by the Board in 2005 on amending the Code on which a joint response on behalf of the Standards Committees for the County Council, Police and Fire and Rescue Authorities had been made, endorsing the Board's aim to ensure the Code would be an easily understood, living document that would take into account the realities of serving local communities.

The Government had now published a consultation paper seeking the views of principal local authorities, parish councils and other organisations on the draft of a proposed new Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members with responses required by 9 March 2007.

The Monitoring Officer had met with the three Standards Committee Chairmen to discuss the consultation paper and as a result a suggested joint response was included with the report for Member comment.

#### **Resolved:**

That the suggested response to the consultation paper as detailed in the report be approved.

The Chairman of the meeting considered the following item of business to be of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration because of the need for Members to decide how they wished to receive information in the future.

#### A4 **Receipt of information by Standards Committee Members**

A member of the Standards Committee for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority informed members that he had received information recently direct from the Standards Board for England and sought clarification as to how information should be sent to Committee Members i.e. via the Monitoring Officer or from the Standards Board direct.

It was confirmed that all information received by the Monitoring Officer from the Standards Board for England was carefully scrutinised to determine whether it was relevant for circulation to Members.

**Resolved:**

That Members express a preference for all correspondence from the Standards Board to be received via the Monitoring Officer filter.