

**DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL  
DURHAM POLICE AUTHORITY  
COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

**At a Joint Meeting of the Standards Committees** held at the County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 20 November 2007 at 10.00 a.m.**

**PRESENT:**

**Mr E Marchant** in the Chair

**Durham County Council Standards Committee:**

Councillors Barker, Stelling and Williams.

**Durham Police Authority Standards Committee:**

Mrs C Blythe, Mrs E Davies, Mr N Vaulks and Mrs M Khan-Willis

**County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority Standards Committee:**

Councillor Simmons, Mr Ault and Mr Balls

**Other Members:**

Councillors N C Foster, Iveson, Manton and Mr M Iveson.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P Thompson and Mrs D Winter.

**A1 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2007 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

With reference to Minute A1 (the Local Member being kept informed about service complaints and dip sampling of files) the Committee was advised that these two issues would now be tackled by obtaining prior consent from the complainant.

With reference to Minute A5 (reference by the Omdsman of a locally settled case involving delay and non-disclosure) the Committee was advised that further investigation had revealed that the delay was attributable to a very complicated set of personal care circumstances and the non-disclosure had occurred because of an ongoing disciplinary procedure, and that the procedure had now been amended to prevent future occurrences.

## **A2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received from members in relation to the business on the agenda.

## **A3 The Code Uncovered – Standards Board DVD**

The Committee viewed a DVD produced by the Standards Board entitled 'The Code Uncovered', which covered Declarations of Interest, disclosing confidential information and bullying. The DVD would be made available to individual Members on request.

## **A4 Sixth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees – 15-16 October 2007 – ICC Birmingham**

The Committee noted a report of the Delegates who attended the Sixth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees on 15 and 16 October 2007 at the ICC in Birmingham (for copy of report see file of Minutes).

## **A5 The Regulatory Reform (Collaboration etc. between Ombudsmen) Order 2007**

The Committee noted a report of the Acting Director of Corporate Services about the enactment of The Regulatory Reform (Collaboration etc. Between Ombudsmen) Order 2007 (for copy of report see file of Minutes).

The Order enabled the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Local Government Ombudsman for England and the Health Service Ombudsman to work together collaboratively on cases and issues that are relevant to more than one of their individual jurisdictions, and also allowed for the provision of mediation during an Ombudsman investigation.

## **A6 Ethical Standards Survey**

The Committee considered a report of the Acting Director (Corporate Services) and Monitoring Officer about the Ethical Standards Survey conducted by the External Auditor (Audit Commission) (for copy see file of Minutes)

Catherine Banks of the Audit Commission presented the findings of the Survey to the Committee. The self assessment survey was issued to all councillors and senior officers of the Council and was completed between March and April 2007.

The Survey resulted in seven recommendations, which were addressed in an Action Plan attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

**Resolved:**

That the draft report on the Ethical Standards Survey be noted, and the Action Plan at Appendix 2 to the report be agreed.

**A7 Annual Report of Social Care Representations Procedure 2006/07**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services about performance in respect of the handling and consideration of adult social care representations and complaints, and non-statutory complaints in Adult and Community Services as contained in the Annual Report on Representations 2006/07 (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the report be noted
- (ii) That the publication of the report and its circulation to key stakeholders including service users and carers, staff and the general public be endorsed to Cabinet
- (iii) That the Committee welcome the progress made in the Service

**A8 Annual Report of Social Care Representations Procedure 2006/07**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services regarding the handling and consideration of representations as contained in the Annual Report on Representations 2006/07 (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the report be noted
- (ii) That the publication of the report and its circulation to key stakeholders including service users and carers, staff and the general public be endorsed to Cabinet
- (iii) That the Committee welcome the progress made in the Service

**A9 Complaints Handling for the Period July to September 2007**

The Committee noted a report from the Acting Director of Corporate Services and Monitoring Officer which provided details of complaints handling in the Council during the period July to September 2007 (for copy of report see file of Minutes).

**A10 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 item of business on the grounds

that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the said Act.

**B11 Review of Completed Complaint Files**

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