

# STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday,  
6 July 2006  
1.00 p.m.

Council Chamber,  
Council Offices, Spennymoor

# AGENDA and REPORTS

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যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান অথবা যদি আপনার একজন ইন্টারপ্রেটারের প্রয়োজন হয়, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

本文件可以翻譯為另一語文版本，或製作成另一格式，如有此需要，或需要傳譯員的協助，請與我們聯絡。

यह दस्तावेज़ यदि आपको किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये, या आपको आनुवाद-सेवाओं की आवश्यकता हो तो हमसे संपर्क करें

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਸਮਝਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰੈਟਰ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

یہ دستاویز اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہو، یا اگر آپ کو ترجمان کی خدمات چاہئیں تو براۓ مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کیجئے۔

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## AGENDA

**1. APOLOGIES**

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To notify the Chairman of any items that appear later in the agenda in which you may have an interest.

**3. MINUTES**

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2006. (Pages 1 - 4)

**4. COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE: ANNUAL REPORT 2005**

To consider the attached report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer. (Pages 5 - 12)

**5. PROCEDURE FOR GRANTING DISPENSATIONS**

To consider the attached report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer. (Pages 13 - 20)

**6. STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN 2006/2007**

To consider the attached report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer. (Pages 21 - 28)

**7. ARRANGEMENTS FOR REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION**

To consider the attached report of the Chief Executive. (Pages 29 - 36)

**8. STANDARDS TRAINING EVENT: 4TH APRIL 2006: EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK**

To consider the attached report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer. (Pages 37 - 44)

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2006 at 1.00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Spennymoor.

**10. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**

Members are respectfully requested to give the Chief Executive notice of items they would wish to raise under the heading not later than 12 noon on the day preceding the meeting, in order that consultation may take place with the Chairman who will determine whether the item will be accepted.

Council Offices  
SPENNYMOOR  
28<sup>th</sup> June 2006

Councillor L. Petterson (Chairman)  
Councillors Mrs. B. Graham, A. Gray, Mrs. L. Hovvels, Mrs. C. Sproat and J. Wayman J.P

Councillor J. Marr (Spennymoor Town Council)  
Mr. I. Jamieson (Independent Member)

## **Background Documents**

Monitoring Officer's advice issued since previous meeting:

### ***MO Series***

|      |   |
|------|---|
| MO77 | Bi-Annual Review of Registers of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality: Letter to Members of Borough and Parish and Town Councils |
| MO78 | Standards Board Bulletin No. 29   |
| MO79 | Declaring Interests at Meetings: Questions for Members to ask themselves  |
| MO80 | Monitoring Officer advice upon importance of attendance at Housing Review Panels  |

### ***MO/SBC Series***

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| MO/SBC34 | Review of Guidance on RIPA                             |
| MO/SBC35 | Code of Practice on Covert Human Intelligence Re-Issue |
| MO/SBC36 | Re-Issue of RIPA Forms for Practitioners               |
| MO/SBC37 | RIPA Singlepoint Guidance                              |
| MO/SBC38 | RIPA: Update: New Regulations                          |
| MO/SBC39 | Home Office Protocol: CCTV                             |

### ***MO/SBC/CONS Series***

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| MO/SBC/CONS13 | Local Authorities Regulations 2006                                |
| MO/SBC/CONS14 | Constitutional amendments approved on 21 <sup>st</sup> April 2006 |
| MO/SBC/CONS15 | Dates for Future Reviews of Constitution                          |

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#### ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection in relation to this Agenda and associated papers should contact Miss S. Billingham, Tel 01388 816166 Ext 4240, [sbillingham@sedgefield.gov.uk](mailto:sbillingham@sedgefield.gov.uk)

# Item 3

## SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,  
Council Offices,  
Spennymoor

Friday  
5 May 2006

Time: 1.00 p.m.

**Present:** L. Petterson (Chairman) and

Councillors A. Gray, Mrs. C. Sproat and J. Wayman J.P

**Observer**

Mrs. C. Sproat (Sedgefield Borough Council)

**Apologies:** Councillors Mrs. B. Graham, Mrs. L. Hovvels and G.M.R. Howe

**Parish/Town Council member**

Councillor J. Marr (Spennymoor Town Council)

**Independent Member**

Mr. I. Jamieson

**ST.32/05**

**MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**ST.33/05**

**THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Consideration was given to a joint report of the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Resources detailing the issues that would need to be considered in the establishment of an Audit Committee. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were informed of the Council's current position, the views of the Audit Commission to encourage local authorities to establish an Audit Committee and given information on the guidance note issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to aid in the establishment of the audit committee being more effective.

Members were also requested to consider the statement of purpose, the audit committee's core functions, features, structure and composition as detailed in the report.

Detailed discussion was held regarding the composition of the Committee. Concerns were raised as to Cabinet's agreement that the committee should be composed of six members with only one being able to sit on both the Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committee. It was felt that the same ruling should be in place for all members and not just one.

H. Moses explained that the proposals issued by CIPFA had been submitted to Cabinet where the decision had been made to allow: -

“No more than one Member from Cabinet and one member from Overview and Scrutiny Committee to serve on the Audit Committee.”

Members were reminded that the report would be submitted to Annual Council for final consideration therefore concerns should also be raised at that point.

*RECOMMENDED: That the proposals outlined in the report be supported subject to further consideration to the Audit Committee’s composition.*

**ST.34/05 REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION - MEMBER INVOLVEMENT - PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE 'CALL IN' PROCEDURE**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive Officer detailing proposals initiated by Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees to amend the Constitution, specifically ‘call-in’ rules. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were reminded of the current rules for call-in and informed of the proposed amendments as detailed in the report.

*RECOMMENDED: That the proposal outlined in the report be supported.*

**ST.35/05 INTERIM MANAGEMENT AND RESTRUCTURING OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**

Copies of Appendix 2 from the above report were distributed to Members of the Committee for information. (For copy see file of Minutes).

*AGREED: That the information outlined in Appendix 2 be noted.*

**ST.36/05 CHANGES TO POLITICAL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

The Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer advised that the Committee should adjourn in order for the above report to be finalised and considered by Standards Committee prior to its submission and consideration by Full Council at its Annual General meeting, on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

Members would be informed of the date of the meeting once arranged.

*AGREED: That the meeting be adjourned to consider the Changes To Political Management Structure prior to its consideration by Full Council at the Annual General Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2006.*

***The Committee re-convened on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2006 May at 1.00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Spennymoor with the following Members present: -***

***I. Jamieson (Chairman) and  
Councillor A. Gray***

***Spennymoor Town Council  
Councillor J. Marr***

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive Officer detailing the proposed arrangements for refining the Cabinets portfolios of the Council to more closely align them to the Council's Corporate Ambitions. It also suggested an amendment to the Community Outcomes and Values. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Specific reference was made to the three attached appendices outlining the revisions to the Corporate Ambitions, the Strategic Political Management Structure and the Corporate Ambitions and Political Management.

Discussion was held regarding the changes to Best Value and who had been consulted in producing the proposed changes. A. Boddy informed Members that a number of meetings had taken place with the Audit Commission, Management Team, the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader, a Leaders Meeting was then held to discuss the final proposals.

***AGREED:***                    *That Council be recommended to approve the revised Community Outcomes and Values, the amendments to the Council's Strategic Political Management Structure and the consequential amendments to the Constitution as outlined in the report.*

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**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Miss S. Billingham, Tel 01388 816166 Ext 4240, sbillingham@sedgefield.gov.uk

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# Item 4

## REPORT TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

6<sup>th</sup> JULY 2006

## REPORT OF SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL AND MONITORING OFFICER

### COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE: ANNUAL REPORT 2005

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is a summary of the Annual Report 2005 published by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
- 1.2 John Major established the Committee on Standards in Public Life in October 1994, the Committee was given wide terms of reference: "To examine current concerns about standards of conduct of all holders of public office, including arrangements relating to financial and commercial activities, and make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements which might be required to ensure the highest standards of propriety in public life".
- 1.3 The Committee is looked upon as an ethical workshop called in to do running repairs, which continues to monitor the ethical environment and respond to issues of concern, which may arise.
- 1.4 In the course of the last year the Committee has pointed to the importance of ensuring that key mechanisms and institutions concerned with propriety continue to carry public confidence and operate in a fully proportionate manner.
- 1.5 The Government has welcomed the Committees recommendations to radically change the system for complaining against local government councillors by transforming the Standards Board for England into a strategic regulator and is committed to implementing the idea.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Standards Committee be appraised of the report and future changes be noted.

#### 3. DETAIL

- 3.1 **Overview of Activities:** The Committee held nine meetings in 2005, in addition to conducting a post-election consultation exercise with over forty key stakeholders.
- 3.2 The main areas of focus for enquiry were, appointments and reappointments to public bodies; the management and enforcement of

Codes of Conduct including declarations of interest across local government and other public bodies; fundamental structural and organisational weaknesses in the existing frameworks for public appointments and ethical standards in local government.

- 3.3 One of the major reports published by the Committee, was the Tenth Report, *Getting the Balance Right: Implementing Standards of Conduct in Public Life*.
- 3.4 This report highlighted that, while some improvements have been made in recent years, there are still fundamental structural and organisational weaknesses in the existing frameworks for public appointments and ethical standards in local government. Both regulatory regimes require significant changes if they are to operate in a way, which wins public trust and embeds an ethical culture into our public bodies.
- 3.5 Specifically, on local government, the Committee recommended changes to the legislative framework for ethical standards focusing on:
- A move to locally based arrangements for the initial handling, investigation and determination of complaints by existing local Standards Committees for all but the most serious cases of alleged misconduct.
  - A strengthening of the independent composition of local Standards Committees in preparation to take on their new role of complaint handling from 2007.
  - Changes to the Code of Conduct to make it more accessible to councillors and the public; to remove unnecessary restrictions on councillors representing their constituents; and to make a clearer distinction between private and official conduct.
- 3.6 The Committee further recommended the embedding of the Seven Principles of Public life into organisational culture. The Committee believe that organisational culture is key to delivering high standards of propriety in public life.
- 3.7 The Government responded to the Tenth Report and accepted the majority of proposals, in particular, the fundamental transformation of the Standards Board, a move towards local handling of complaints, and changes to the Code of Conduct.
- 3.8 However, the Government did reject a number of the recommendations but only in areas concerning public appointments not local government.
- 3.9 **The Committee's Post – Election Consultation Exercise**  
The Committee undertook a post-election consultation exercise between May and September 2005. The Committee engaged with stakeholders in a discussion about which “current concerns” were likely to be compatible with a future public enquiry.

- 3.10 Three main potential inquiry areas received support during the consultation meetings:
- Review of the Electoral Commission
  - Review of the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.
  - Conflicts of Interest: It was agreed that it would be a useful and valuable exercise to create appropriate guidance on conflicts of interest for office-holders and public bodies.
- 3.11 **Eleventh Inquiry: Review of the Electoral Commission.**  
The Electoral Commission occupies an important and unique position in particular to secure high standards and build trust in the democratic process.
- 3.12 The Commissions' role encompasses both executive and advisory functions and is responsible for overseeing a number of aspects of electoral law.
- 3.13 **Research into Public Attitudes towards standards of conduct in public life.**  
The Committee continued work on the long-term research project initiated in 2001, to establish a benchmark of public opinions about standards of conduct in public life.
- 3.14 *Public attitudes: Review of the Seven Principles of Public Life:*  
The research carried out in 2002 and 2004 demonstrated that the Seven Principles do broadly reflect the current views and priorities of the public. However, the language used to describe the Seven Principles is perceived as somewhat arcane and inaccessible.
- 3.15 In addition, the research indicated that the public places a high priority on a much broader definition of honesty than currently described by the Seven Principles. Research is ongoing in this area and the report on the findings will be published later in 2006.
- 3.16 An Advisory Board was appointed in 2001 in order to assist the Committee and the researchers and has been involved in all key milestones of the research programme. The Advisory Board was further commissioned for the repeat survey and review of the Seven Principles.
- 3.17 **Presentations:** Sir Andrew Likierman made a presentation to the Committee on progress with his review of corporate governance in central departments and highlighted the following points:
- This review was undertaken to investigate a gap in corporate guidance namely an overview of the processes and responsibilities within departments.
  - The guidance has been created to act as a living document and will evolve as practice develops.

- A guide for new ministers, focusing on the operation of boards and the role of non-executive directors, will ensure all roles are clearly defined.
  - The code is guidance on good practice, building on existing constitutional and statutory practice.
- 3.18 **Audit Commission:** This commission has been involved in a research study looking into the Governance of Partnerships: how governance can be made more effective across the public sector, both in terms of improved service outcomes for users and in promoting greater accountability in the use of public funds. The study was published in October 2005, and will inform the revision of existing audit and inspection methodologies.
- 3.19 Some of the key messages identified in the report were:
- Partnerships are essential to improve some services.
  - Partnerships bring risks as well as opportunities, for example, what are the governance arrangements of partnerships?
  - Partnerships bring costs as well as benefits, for example, how (and when) do partnerships add value?
  - Not all partnerships engage the public effectively.
  - The principles of good governance are harder to apply in partnerships.
- 3.20 It has been revealed that little is known about how partnerships work in practice. Although, there is evidence that partnership working brings real benefits. However, partnerships need more effective accountability, not enough public bodies have comprehensive agreements for their significant partnerships despite the fact that such agreements are the basis for better governance and management of risks.
- 3.21 The findings highlighted a need for partnerships to manage different issues with different Codes of Conduct for elected members, and members with multiple roles. The report also suggests that regulators should collaborate to ensure they share audit and inspection information about how local public bodies work in partnership.
- 3.22 **Statistics Commission:** This Commission is an independent non-departmental public body. It was set up to ensure that official statistics are trustworthy and responsive to public needs. The Commission is concerned about the levels of trust in official statistics as highlighted by a recent study.
- 3.23 The Commission have recommended that a statutory framework with independent oversight to govern the production of statistics be implemented. This would include a statutory code and a new statutory commission. The Commission asserts that independent scrutiny of national statistics is essential to counter the lack of public trust.
- 3.24 **House of Lords Appointments Commission:** The Commission's role is the vetting of nominees for peerages and honours. On 1<sup>st</sup> March

2005 the Prime Minister invited the Commission to take on the work previously carried out by the Political Honours Scrutiny Committee.

- 3.25 **Standards Issues: The operation of the Ministerial Code**  
In order for confidence to be retained in relation to the investigation of complaints about alleged breaches of the Ministerial Code, recommendations included the appointment of an independent office-holder.
- 3.26 It was highlighted that there is a need for a clear, well understood, and independent process to establish the facts about an allegation to ensure all parties are treated fairly and issues of legitimate public concern are properly addressed. The Committee was clear that the guardian and keeper of the Ministerial Code is the Prime Minister.
- 3.27 **Changes to the Law on Special Advisers:** The Committee was consulted by the Government on 20 May 2005 about the change to the law and further proposed changes to the Code of Conduct for Special Advisors and the Ministerial Code. The Committee set out arrangements for special advisers but also has serious concerns about the lack of transparency in their approach and in the detail of some of the changes proposed to the Codes.
- 3.28 The Committee is concerned about public perception and consequent impact on public trust that may result from the method the Government is choosing to effect the changes it wishes to make. Even if there is no intention to extend special advisers' powers, the Committee believes that this could be the perception generated by conducting this consultation on an issue, which has been clear concern to the public, parliament and media.
- 3.29 Disappointment was expressed when it emerged that the Government had failed to take into account its concerns about aspects of the revised Code of Conduct for Special Advisers.
- 3.30 Specific proposals were highlighted to be drawn to the Prime Minister's attention including, the need for civil servants and special advisers to work collaboratively with officials in a relationship characterised by trust and capacity for the creation of expert advisers.
- 3.31 **Review of the MPs' Code of Conduct:** The following recommendations were made:
- Addition of provisions to make clearer the purpose and scope of the Code.
  - New statements of Members' duties in respect of Parliamentary allowances.
  - Extension of the existing provisions regarding misuse of Parliamentary allowances to misuse of facilities and services provided by the House.
- 3.32 The aims of the changes are to enhance the Code's clarity, prominence and persuasiveness, with both Members of the House and the public.

The Committee welcomes the revised Code and the continued efficiency of framework for MP's.

- 3.33 **House of Lords Appointments Commission:** In February 2005 the Government published Reform of the Honours System.
- 3.34 In line with principles of integrity and openness the Committee has a continuing interest in the changing nature of the scrutiny of appointments to the House of Lords. The Political Honours Scrutiny Committee was disbanded in March 2005 due to the Government's reform of the Honours system and the new arrangements have worked well for the main but there have been individual cases, which have led to significant public concern about the integrity of the honours system.
- 3.35 **Trust in Government Statistics:** Through its survey of public attitudes towards standards of conduct in public life, the Committee has taken a close interest in levels of public trust in Government information, particularly official statistics. The Committee has therefore followed closely the work of the Statistics Commission and their call for a robust statutory framework with independent oversight for the production of official statistics.
- 3.36 In 2004 the Commission published a report, which proposed a new statutory framework and independent oversight for the production of official statistics as a means to address public trust and the adequacy of official figures.
- 3.37 Many decisions affecting all our lives are driven by official statistics and unless the public trust the figures on which such decisions are based they will not trust the decision makers. Further detailed legislative proposals are to be announced by the Government in due time.
- 3.38 **Draft Civil Service Bill:** The Committee has since its establishment in 1994, taken a close interest in both the substance and legal basis of the role, governance and values of the Civil Service and the contribution these make to ensure the highest standards of conduct in public life.
- 3.39 It was noted in February 2006 that a Civil Service Act would protect civil servants from political interference and entrench the non-partisan role of the civil service. It is noted in this report that the Government had not yet made a statement on the outcome of the consultation, which ended twelve months ago.
- 3.40 **Rules for Civil Servants leaving Crown Service to take up business appointments:** The business appointment rules for civil servants were addressed in the Committee's First Report (1995), which recommended that a similar system should apply to Ministers. It is proposed that a simplification of the criteria for civil servants taking business appointments and reducing them to a single test of the propriety of the proposed employment.

- 3.41 Several existing tests of impropriety are to be removed and there should be one sanction only and therefore the individual would be unable to join the prospective employer for two years.
- 3.42 **Electoral Propriety:** There was an increase in the take-up of postal voting at the 2005 general election compared to 2001. It has become a concern that postal ballots had been used corruptly in local elections; this along with several other concerns has prompted the Committee to carry out its own post-election Consultation exercise.
- 3.43 **Implementation of Freedom of Information Act:** The Committee has warmly welcomed the implementation of the Act and is looking forward to reviewing its operation after a reasonable period.

#### **4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 No specific financial implications have been identified.

#### **5. CONSULTATIONS**

- 5.1 The Council's Management Team has considered this report.

#### **6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 All material considerations have been taken into account in the contents of this Report. In particular, risks may arise unless Members of Council are fully appraised on standards matters.

#### **7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None apply.

**Contact Officer:** Dennis A. Hall/Laura Starrs  
**Telephone Number:** 01388 816166, Ext. 4268  
**E-mail address:** dahall@sedgefield.gov.uk

**Wards:** N/A

**Key Decision Validation:** N/A

**Background Papers**

Annual Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life 2005

**Examination by Statutory Officers**

|   | <b>Yes</b>               | <b>Not<br/>Applicable</b> |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. The report has been examined by the Council’s Head of the Paid Service or his representative | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 2. The content has been examined by the Council’s S.151 Officer or his representative           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 3. The content has been examined by the Council’s Monitoring Officer or his representative      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 4. The report has been approved by Management Team  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |



# Item 5

## REPORT TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

6<sup>th</sup> JULY 2006

## REPORT OF SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL AND MONITORING OFFICER

### PROCEDURE FOR GRANTING DISPENSATIONS

#### 1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report outlines the procedure and regulations relating to the granting of dispensations. A Standards Committee has the authority, as set out in The Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) (Dispensations) Regulations 2002, to grant dispensations to Members and Town and Parish Councillors, only in certain circumstances. Dispensations can only be granted by the Council's Standards Committee acting upon a written request from a Member.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Standards Committee be appraised of the report and the procedure and regulations be noted and followed.

2.2 That Borough, Parish and Town Councillors be informed of these arrangements.

#### 3. DETAIL

3.1 Under the mandatory provisions of the Model Code of Members' Conduct a Member with a prejudicial interest in a matter is precluded from participating in the consideration of that matter. However, in certain circumstances a Member may apply to the Standards Committee for a dispensation enabling him/her to participate. The grant of a dispensation operates so as to prevent the Member's participation from being a breach of the Code.

3.2 Dispensations can only be granted in limited circumstances because it would be inappropriate for a Member to apply for a dispensation every time they had a prejudicial interest.

3.3 **Circumstances in which Dispensations may be Granted:** The Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) (Dispensations) Regulations set out limited circumstances in which dispensations may be granted.

3.4 Section 3(1)(a) and (b) of the Regulations details the only circumstances in which Standards Committees may grant a dispensation. Section 3(1)(a) refers to the transaction of business of the authority being impeded by or as a result of the mandatory provisions of the Code because: –

- (a) the number of members that are prohibited from taking part is more than 50 per cent of those members entitled or required to participate because of a prejudicial interest, or;
- (b) the authority is unable to meet its duty to comply with the political balance principles under section 15(4) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, due to prejudicial interests.
- 3.5 Section 3(1)(b) refers to a Member submitting a written request for a dispensation to the Standards Committee explaining why it is desirable for the dispensation to be granted.
- 3.6 The political balance requirements have been disapplied to Development Control Committees and accordingly the political balance circumstance under which a dispensation can be granted does not apply to the consideration of development control matters.
- 3.7 For Parish and Town Councils, the Standards Committee will be responsible for granting dispensations. The request for dispensation must be submitted in writing and agreed by the Standards Committee before the meeting where the dispensation is required.
- 3.8 **When Dispensations should not be granted:** A dispensation can never be granted in the following circumstances, where:
- A Member is prohibited from participating in the consideration of the matter at a meeting of an Overview and Scrutiny committee or Sub-Committee where that consideration relates to any decision made or action taken by any of the Council's Committees, Sub-Committees, joint Committees or joint Sub-Committees of which he or she may also be a Member; or
  - Where a Member of the Cabinet is prohibited from exercising functions, which would otherwise be discharged, solely by him or her.
  - Where the dispensation would conflict with the statutory general principles which underlie the Code of Members' Conduct:
    - i. Selflessness: Members should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.
    - ii. Honesty and integrity: Members should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.
    - iii. Objectivity: Members should make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.
    - iv. Accountability: Members should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities, and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.

- v. *Openness*: Members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority, and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.
- vi. *Personal Judgement*: Members may take account of the views of others, including their political groups, but should reach their own conclusions on the issues before them and act in accordance with those conclusions.
- vii. *Respect for Others*: Members should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers, and its other employees.
- viii. *Duty to Uphold the Law*: Members should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.
- ix. *Stewardship*: Members should do whatever they are able to do to ensure that their authorities use their resources prudently and in accordance with the law.
- x. *Leadership*: Members should promote and support these principles by leadership, and by example, and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.

3.9 A dispensation should not be granted where the dispensation would conflict with the overriding requirements of the Local Code of Conduct.

3.10 Consideration must take account of any legal requirement or statutory guidance.

**3.11 Procedure for Granting Dispensations:**

- 1) All requests for a dispensation must be submitted, in writing, as soon as practicable to the Monitoring Officer, but not less than 3 working days before the meeting.
- 2) The Monitoring Officer will forward the request for dispensation to all Members of the Standards Committee and the dispensation request will be an item on the agenda of the next scheduled meeting of the Standards Committee.
- 3) The Monitoring Officer will then confirm, in writing, to the Member making the request, the decision of the Standards Committee.
- 4) A dispensation may not last for more than four years from the date of the giving of the dispensation.

3.12 **How to apply for a dispensation:** If a Member wishes to seek a dispensation to enable him or her to participate in the consideration of a matter from which he/she would be excluded by the Code, he/she should write to or e-mail the Monitoring Officer requesting a dispensation and explaining why it is desirable for a dispensation to be granted.

3.13 **Guidance from the Standards Board on how a Standards Committee can decide upon a dispensation request:** Once the

Standards Committee has taken into account the circumstances that exist under section 3(1) (a) and (b) of the Regulations and any other relevant circumstances, the Standards Committee may consider that a dispensation should be granted.

- 3.14 The section 3(1) (a) and (b) Regulations give discretion to the Committee to determine the extent of any dispensation. For example, the Committee may consider that it is appropriate that the dispensation allows the Member to either speak or not vote, or to fully participate and vote.
- 3.15 The Standards Board suggest that the Regulations give the Standards Committee the discretion to determine how long the dispensation should apply, although it cannot be longer than four years.
- 3.16 The Standards Committee can refuse to grant a dispensation. The Regulations allow discretion rather than imposing an obligation to grant a dispensation.
- 3.17 **Can a General Dispensation be Granted?** The general view of the Standards Board is that the Regulations do not make provisions for general dispensations to be granted. As outlined above, the Regulations set out clearly limited circumstances in which Members may be granted dispensations.
- 3.18 **Records of Dispensations:** The Standards Committee must ensure that the existence, duration and nature of any dispensation is recorded in writing and that a record is kept with the Register of Interests established and maintained under section 81(1) of the Local Government Act 2000.

#### **4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 No specific financial implications have been identified.

#### **5. CONSULTATIONS**

- 5.1 The Council's Management Team has considered this report.

#### **6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 All material considerations have been taken into account in the contents of this report. In particular, risks may arise unless Members of Council are fully appraised on standards matters.

#### **7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None apply.

#### **8. LIST OF APPENDICES**

## 8.1 Appendix 1 - Dispensation Flowchart.

**Contact Officer:** Dennis A. Hall/Laura Starrs  
**Telephone Number:** 01388 816166, Ext. 4268  
**E-mail address:** dahall@sedgefield.gov.uk

**Wards:** N/A

**Key Decision Validation:** N/A

### **Background Papers**

Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (England) Order 2001  
Local Government Act 2000 s.81 (5)  
Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) (Dispensations) Regulations 2002  
Statutory Instrument 2002 No. 339  
Standards Board Bulletin, Issue 7, November 2002  
Standards Committee Report – 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 2003 – ST.7/02  
Standards Committee Report – 4<sup>th</sup> September 2002 – ST.5/01  
MO8 – Ethical framework from the O.T.L.R and Dispensations  
MO12 – Dispensations Procedure

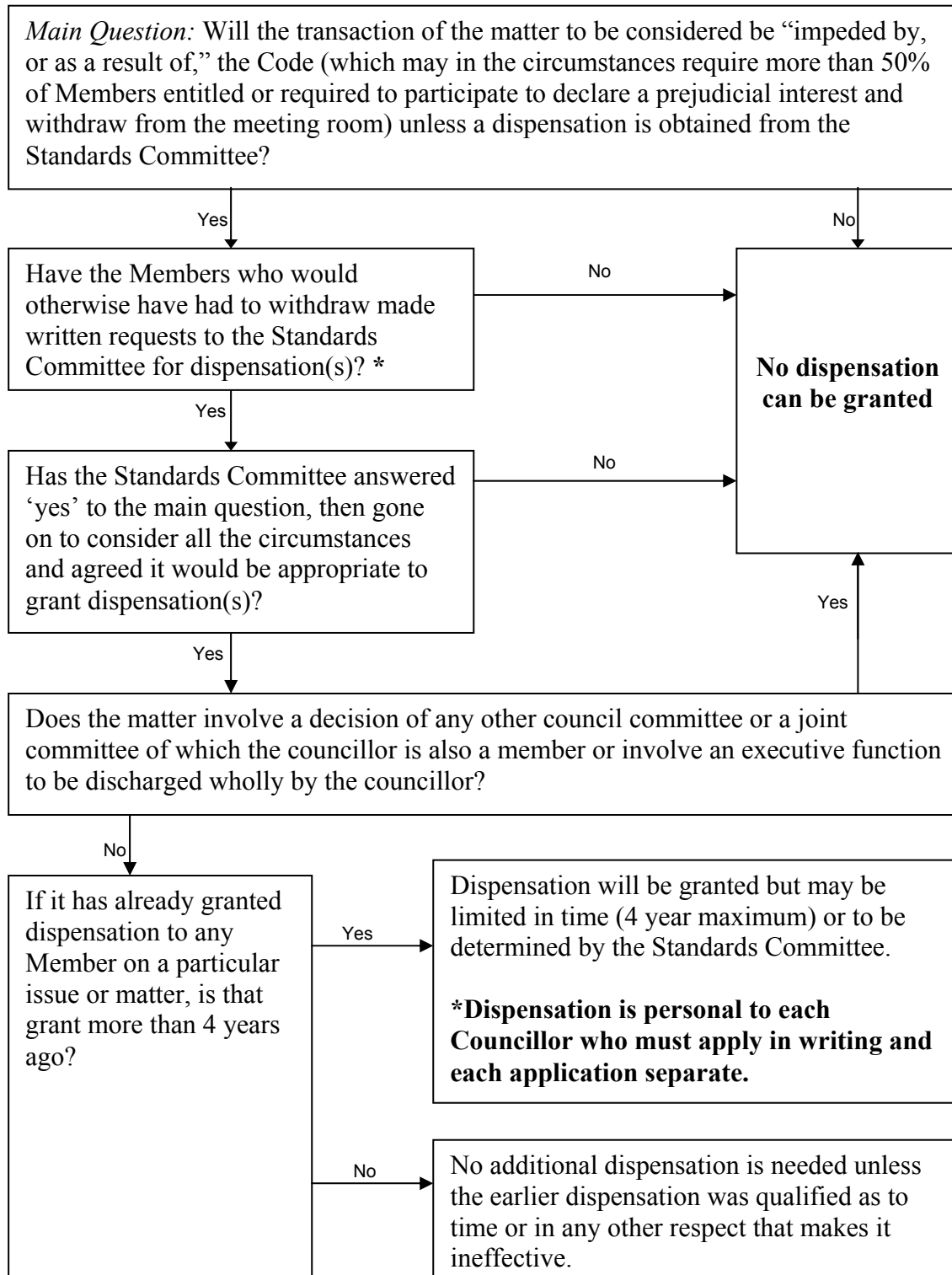
**Examination by Statutory Officers**

**Not**

|   | <b>Yes</b>               | <b>Applicable</b>        |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The report has been examined by the Council's Head of the Paid Service or his representative | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. The content has been examined by the Council's S.151 Officer or his representative           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. The report has been approved by Management Team  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Dispensation Flowchart: The Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) (Dispensation) Regulations 2002.**

If more than half your councillors are coded “out” on a particular item(s) of business, they should consider applying in writing to the Council’s Standards Committee via the Monitoring Officer for a dispensation.



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# Item 6

## REPORT TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

6<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2006

## REPORT OF SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL AND MONITORING OFFICER

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN 2006/2007

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report details a forward plan for the Standards Committee for 2006/2007.
- 1.2 The forward plan outlines the areas that are to be considered at future Standards Committee meetings. All areas are in accordance with the Standards remit as outlined in Article 9 of the Constitution.

#### 2. RECCOMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Standards Committee be appraised of the report and the forward plan be approved.

#### 3. DETAIL

- 3.1 The forward plan has been prepared in conformity with the Standards Committee remit, and aims to;
  - Promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted Members;
  - Assist Councillors and co-opted Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;
  - Advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Member's Code of Conduct;
  - Monitor the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;
  - Advise, train or arrange to train Councillors and co-opted Members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;
  - Deal with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matter which is referred by an Ethical Standards Officer to the Monitoring Officer;
  - The exercise of the above in relation to the Parish Councils wholly or mainly in its area and the Members of those Parish Councils;
  - Overview the whistle blowing policy;
  - Oversee the constitution;
  - Deal with cases referred to the Standards Committee by the Standards Board and to conduct local determination hearings in accordance with the Model Hearing Procedure;

- Take such other steps as may from time to time be taken in accordance with the powers of the Local Government Act 2000 and any subordinate legislation there under;
- To deal with cases referred to the Standards Committee by the Council's Monitoring Officer and to conduct a hearing in accordance with the model hearing procedure, as amended, or substituted, where necessary, for that purpose.

3.2 The forward plan takes into account the Standards remit and identifies how the remit will continue to be met.

#### **4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 No specific financial implications have been identified.

#### **5. CONSULTATIONS**

5.1 The Council's Management Team has considered this report.

#### **6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 All material considerations have been taken into account in the contents of this report. In particular, risks may arise unless Members of Council are fully appraised on standards matters.

#### **7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None apply.

#### **8. LIST OF APPENDICES**

8.1 Appendix 1 - Forward Plan.

**Contact Officer:** Dennis A. Hall/Laura Starrs  
**Telephone Number:** 01388 816166, Ext. 4268  
**E-mail address:** dahall@sedgefield.gov.uk

**Wards:** N/A

**Key Decision Validation:** N/A

#### **Background Papers**

**Examination by Statutory Officers**

|   | <b>Yes</b>               | <b>Not<br/>Applicable</b> |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. The report has been examined by the Council’s Head of the Paid Service or his representative | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 2. The content has been examined by the Council’s S.151 Officer or his representative           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 3. The content has been examined by the Council’s Monitoring Officer or his representative      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 4. The report has been approved by Management Team  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |



**SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN 2006/2007 AND SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES**

| <b>Date</b>                   | <b>Items</b>   | <b>How the items relate to the Standards Remit</b>  |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| 6 <sup>th</sup> July 2006     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and development update.</li> <li>• Procedure for granting dispensations.</li> <li>• Annual Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life.</li> <li>• Constitutional update.</li> <li>• To consider planning a further joint authority annual event.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advising, training or arranging to train Councillors and co-opted Members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted Members.</li> <li>• Oversight of the Constitution.</li> </ul>  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2006 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and development update.</li> <li>• Code of Conduct - Breaches 2005/06 Review.</li> <li>• Ombudsmen's Annual Letter/Annual Report.</li> <li>• Corporate Governance action plan update.</li> <li>• Constitutional update.</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advising, training or arranging to train Councillors and co-opted Members on matters relating to the Members' Code.</li> <li>• Assisting Councillors and co-opted Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• Monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• Oversight of the Constitution.</li> </ul> |

|                                     |   |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| <p>8<sup>th</sup> February 2007</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and development update.</li> <li>• Analysis of current trends in allegations of misconduct for the previous year.</li> <li>• Constitutional update.</li> <li>• Confidential reporting policy.</li> <li>• Leader's Standards and Ethical Strategy Statement.</li> <li>• Members training and development: attendance review (2006).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advising, training or arranging to train Councillors and co-opted Members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• Monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• Assisting Councillors and co-opted Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted Members.</li> <li>• Overview of the whistle blowing policy.</li> <li>• Oversight of the Constitution.</li> </ul> |
| <p>5<sup>th</sup> April 2007</p>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and development update.</li> <li>• Constitutional update.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advising, training or arranging to train Councillors and co-opted Members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted Members.</li> <li>• Oversight of the Constitution.</li> </ul>  |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring Officers guidance and advice notes: MO, MO/SBC and MO/SBC/CONS Series.</li> <li>• Attendance of Monitoring Officer at Management Team and Statutory Officers Meetings.</li> <li>• Attendance at Cabinet and the Regulatory other Committees of the Council</li> <li>• Policy advice to Working Groups.</li> <li>• Monitoring Officer role as chair of County Monitoring Officer's Group.</li> <li>• Standards pages/website development.</li> <li>• On-line Register of Members' Interests.</li> </ul> | <p>On going supporting activities.</p> |
|--|--|--|

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# Item 7

## **REPORT TO STANDARDS (COUNCIL – 28TH JULY 2006)**

**6TH JULY 2006**

## **REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

### **ARRANGEMENTS FOR REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION**

#### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Council's Constitution was adopted on the 24th May 2002 as part of the Council's approach to implementing the Local Government Act 2000. A number of reviews have taken place.
- 1.2 The Constitution itself must necessarily be kept under regular review so as to ensure that it reflects existing law and its operation continues to provide an efficient and effective framework for delivering the Council's aims and objectives. This report is a further review for the purposes of Article 16 of the Constitution.
- 1.3 The recommendations in this report, based on advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer, and following meetings of the Constitutional Review Group, reflect those areas where it is considered appropriate to make some further changes, viz:
  - (a) changes to the operation of the Appeals/Review Panels to improve organisational and meeting arrangements.
  - (b) modifications to the officer delegations at Part 3C : Officer Delegations, made at the request of relevant officers.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Standards Committee recommends to Council approval of the amendments set out in the Appendix and directs the Council's Monitoring Officer:
  - (a) to amend the Constitution accordingly and make all necessary and consequential amendments; and
  - (b) to publish an amended version on the Council's website.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Work has already begun in reviewing the Constitution. A number of officers have formed a Constitutional Review Group, headed by the Monitoring Officer, and its purpose is to consider proposals for change with a view to reflecting the law and improving the efficiency of decision taking within the authority.
- 3.2 Previous reviews are identified in the list of background papers accompanying this Report.

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 It is intended that these changes shall have immediate effect.
- 4.2 The principal changes are referred to in paragraph 1.3 above.

### **5. CONSULTATIONS**

- 5.1 Standards Committee will be consulted on this report on 6th July 2006 and their views taken into consideration.
- 5.2 All Departments of the Council have been consulted with regard to the amendments suggested in this report. Management Team considered the report on 26th June 2006.

**Contact Officer:** D.A. Hall, Solicitor and Monitoring Officer  
**Telephone No:** (01388) 816166, Ext. 4268  
**Email Address:** dahall@sedgefield.gov.uk

#### **Ward(s)**

#### **Key Decision Validation**

#### **Background Papers**

##### *Reports:*

- Council - 16th May 2003
- Council - 26th June 2003
- Standards Committee - 4th November 2003
- Council - 26th November 2003
- Council - 21st May 2004
- Cabinet - 25th November 2004
- Council - 25th February 2005
- Standards Committee - 3rd November 2005
- Council - 25th November 2005
- Standards Committee - 9th February 2006
- Council - 24th February 2006
- Standards Committee - 6th April 2006
- Council - 21st April 2006
- Standards Committee – 5th May 2006
- Council – 19th May 2006

### Examination by Statutory Officers

|   | Yes                                 | Not<br>Applicable        |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The report has been examined by the Council's Head of the Paid Service or his representative | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. The content has been examined by the Council's S.151 Officer or his representative           | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. The report has been approved by Management Team  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



**PROPOSED CHANGES FOR COUNCIL APPROVAL – 28TH JULY 2006**

| Page Reference and Proposed Amendment  | Basis for Change  |
|--|---|
| <p>Part 3 Responsibility for Functions A Council Functions Appeals/Review Panel:</p> <p>Page 47 - Amendments at request of Solicitor to the Council to take account of Section 129 of the Housing Act 1996 and Regulation SI 1997 No. 72 : see attached amendments.</p>  | <p>Request of Solicitor to the Council to take account of regulations.</p>  |
| <p>Part 3 Responsibility for Functions C Officer Delegations:</p> <p>Page 60 – CE49: to add Solicitor to the Council as authorised officer to institute proceedings.</p>   | <p>Request of Solicitor to the Council to coincide with current best practice.</p>  |
| <p>Part 3 Responsibility for Functions C Officer Delegations:</p> <p>Page 69 – NS1, paragraph 1: to be replaced and substituted by the following words:</p> <p>“Any member may, within 21 days of receipt, request that an application be referred to the Development Control Committee for determination, subject to the prior agreement of the Head of Planning Services, acting in consultation with the Chairman of the Development Control Committee, which agreement shall be given where there are grounds that the application may be, or is likely to raise, significant issues of public concern, exceptional or contentious issues or matters of planning precedent.”</p> <p>Page 83 – NS67</p> <p>Removal of Doctor A. Lowe and to be replaced by Doctors R. Gorton, K. Foster and Meng Khaw.</p> <p>Page 93 – new H26</p> <p>“Power to determine applications by owners under Right to Buy Scheme in connection with recovery of discount.”</p> | <p>Request of Solicitor to the Council to coincide with current practices.</p> <p>Request of the Head of Planning Services.</p> <p>Request of the Director of Neighbourhood Services (Environmental Health)</p> <p>Request of Director of Housing</p> |

| Page Reference and Proposed Amendment  | Basis for Change  |
|--|---|
| <p>Part 3 Responsibility for Functions<br/>C Officer Delegations:</p> <p>Page 91 - Amend H3</p> <p>“Authority to request the Solicitor to the Council issue Requests for Warrants seeking Possession.”</p> <p>Page 93</p> <p>New H27</p> <p>“Notice seeking demotion because of Anti-Social Behaviour.” – delegated to Director of Housing.</p> <p>New H28</p> <p>“Notice to extend the Introductory Tenancy period.” – delegated to Director of Housing.</p> <p>New H29</p> <p>“Authority to issue Notice seeking Possession.” – delegated to Director of Housing.</p> <p>New H30</p> <p>“Authority to issue Notice seeking Possession of a dwellinghouse let under a Demoted Tenancy.” – delegated to Director of Housing.</p> | <p>Allows warrants to be requested under 1996 Housing Act (in addition to 1985 Act)</p> <p>New legislation</p> <p>New legislation</p> <p>Power to issue Notice on Introductory Tenants</p> <p>New legislation</p> |

**Proposed Amendments to Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions**  
**A. Council Functions : Appeals/Review Panel**

## **Appeals/Review Panel**

The Appeals/Review Panel provides a single framework for dealing with the different kinds of appeal that arise against decisions of Officers, particularly in relation to housing matters.

The Panel shall be drawn from a pool of 22 Members of the Council for individual hearings as and when required. Five Members will sit on each individual Panel. For the purposes ONLY of reviews under Section 129, Housing Act 1996, 7 members (from the 22 member pool) will be invited to attend on the day of the review, from which 5 members will form the Panel for such a Hearing.

Due to the confidential nature of the matters to be considered, meetings of the Appeals/Review Panel will not be open to the public. However, in the interests of Human Rights the appellants will be invited to attend the meeting to address the Panel.

The following matters will be dealt with by the Appeals/Review Panel:-

- (i) To consider appeals made in writing from applicants wishing to be declared homeless who are aggrieved at the decision on their application and to consider whether the decision has been made in accordance with the relevant legislation and has taken account of all of the facts available.
- (ii) To consider applications made in writing from introductory tenants for a review of a decision to seek to end the introductory tenancy following the service of a notice of proceedings.
- (iii) To consider applications made in writing from ~~secure~~ demoted tenants for a review of the decision to seek possession ~~demote the secure tenancy to introductory tenancy status~~ following the service of a notice to such effect.
- (iv) To consider applications made in writing from introductory tenants for a review of a decision to seek to extend the term of the introductory tenancy following the service of a notice to such effect.
- (v) To consider **written applications made within 14 days from a decision of an Officer under delegated powers made** by owners under the Right to Buy that the Council consider exercising its discretion to seek recovery of the Right to Buy discount. **This panel will determine the issue within 28 days of receipt of a written application and notify the applicant of the decision within 3 working-days thereafter.**

The following powers have been delegated to the Appeals/Review Panel by Council

- (a) To determine appeals dealt with in accordance with (i) above.
- (b) To determine whether the action to seek possession of an introductory tenancy continue or be suspended and to agree the terms of any such suspension of action, in respect of (ii) above.

- (c) To determine whether the action to seek a ~~demoted possession order~~ should continue or be suspended and agree the terms of any such suspension of action, in respect of (iii) above.
- (d) To determine whether the tenancy period should be extended by six months (without the need for a Court Order), in respect of (iv) above.
- (e) To determine, whether ~~clarification~~ of the Council ~~that its~~ should exercise ~~ising~~ its discretion not to recover the discount value under a Right to Buy purchase ~~be exercised~~ and if so to what extent, in respect of (iv) above.

The Appeals/Review Panel will be responsible for carrying out the following functions, which are identified in The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000. Functions marked with an asterisk (\*) are Local Choice Functions, which are identified in the same regulations. The table identifies in the right hand column where authority has been delegated to Officers.

|            | <b>Functions</b>  | <b>Officer Delegation Reference No.</b> |
|------------|---|---|
| <b>1 *</b> | The determination of an appeal against any decision made by or on behalf of the authority, other than statutory appeals made direct to the Courts.            |   |
| <b>2 *</b> | The appointment of review boards under regulations under sub-section (4) of section 34 (determination of claims and reviews) of the Social Security Act 1998. |   |



# Item 8

## REPORT TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

6<sup>th</sup> JULY 2006

## REPORT OF SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL AND MONITORING OFFICER

### STANDARDS TRAINING EVENT: 4<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2006: EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report analyses the evaluation questionnaire responses from the training event on standards issues, presented by Peter Keith Lucas of Bevan, Brittan Solicitors that was held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2006 at Ferryhill Leisure Centre.
- 1.2 The event provided the opportunity to take part in a local standards mock hearing and addressed such issues as problem areas of the Code of Conduct, how complaints arise and are dealt with and sanctions and appeals.

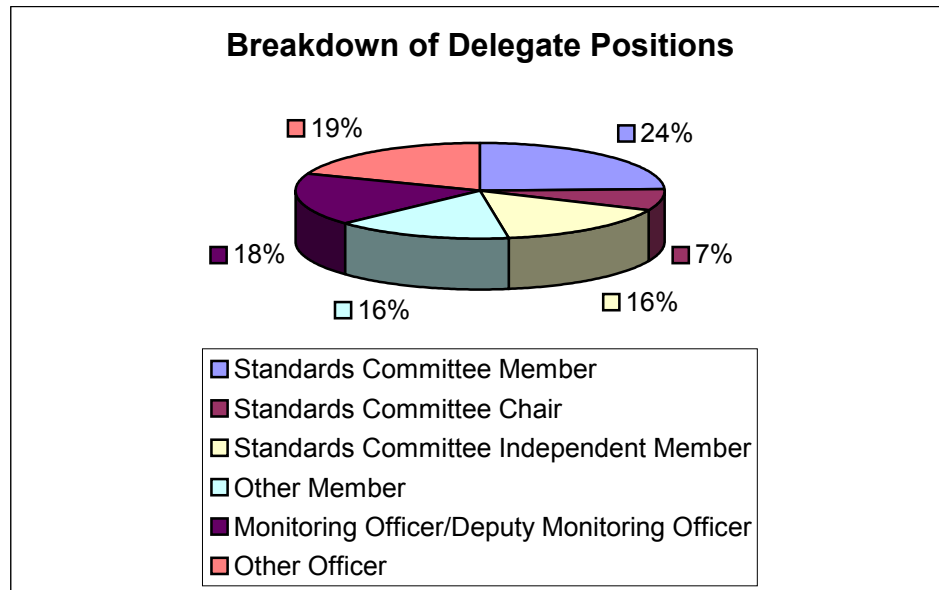
#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Standards Committee be appraised of the report.
- 2.2 That similar training events be arranged on an annual basis.

#### 3. DETAIL

- 3.1 The event attracted a large amount of interest at a regional level and the number of representatives totalled 91, 77 of whom attended.
- 3.2 Out of the 77 delegates, 57 completed the evaluation questionnaire and hence, the analysis is based only on the completed 57 questionnaires. The questionnaire focused on three areas, which consisted of general information, a course satisfaction survey and comments.
- 3.3 **Delegate Positions:** Evidently, the majority of delegates who attended the event were Members, and a large proportion of these were Standard Committee Members. The remaining delegates (37%) consisted of Monitoring Officers, Deputy Monitoring Officers and other officers.

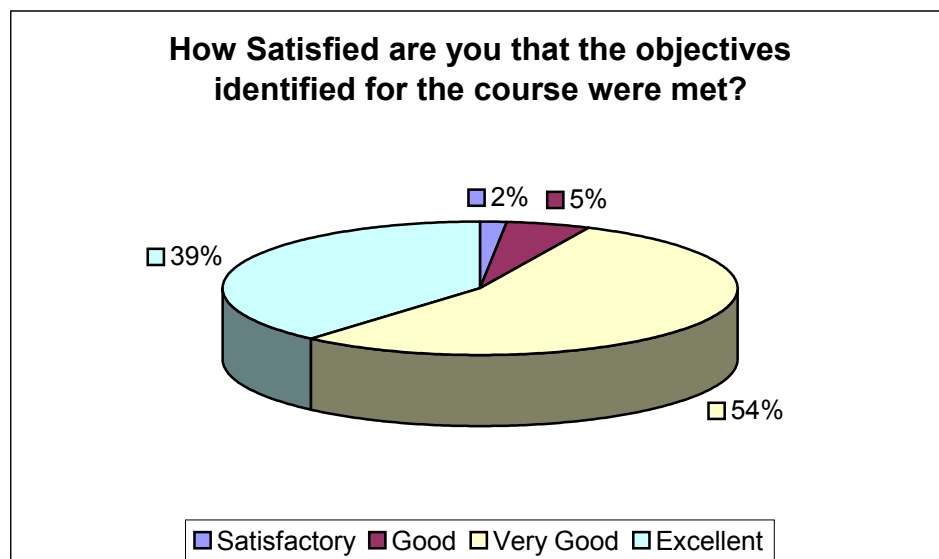
3.4



3.5 **Course Satisfaction Survey:** All of the responses to the questions from the satisfaction survey have been correlated and conclusions have been drawn. Outlined below are the responses to each of the individual questions.

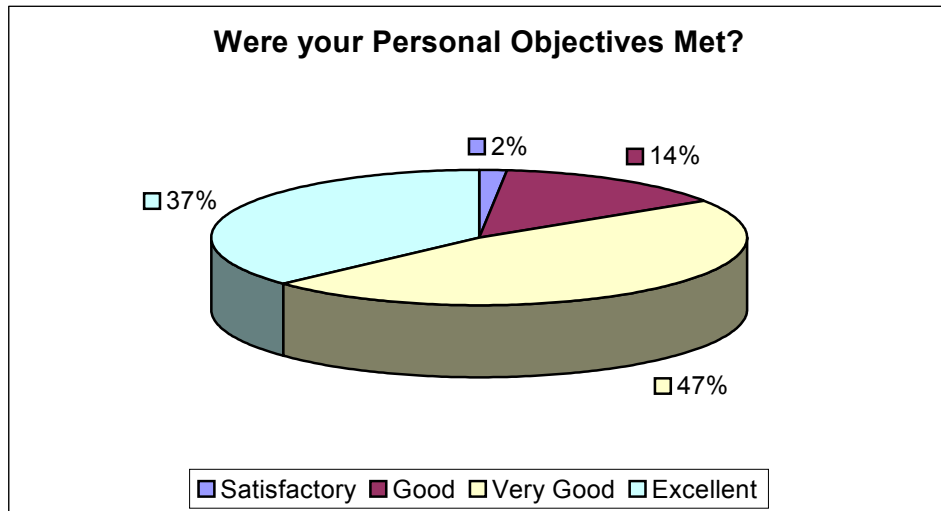
3.6 *How satisfied are you that the objectives identified for the course were met?* The responses to this question were extremely positive, 39% of the delegates were highly satisfied and all delegates were of the opinion that the objectives identified for the course were met to a satisfactory or higher level.

3.7



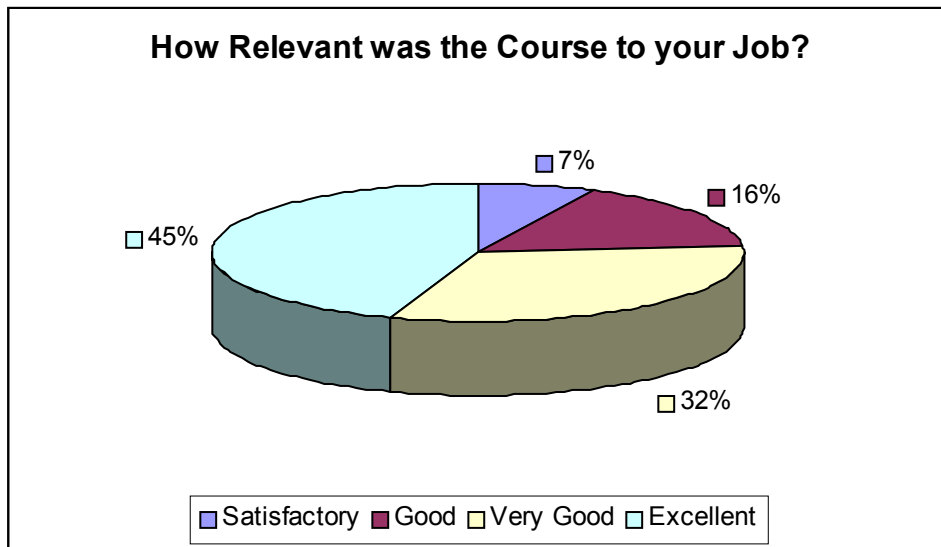
3.8 *Were your personal objectives met?* All of the delegates thought that their personal objectives had been met, over half to a very high standard.

3.9



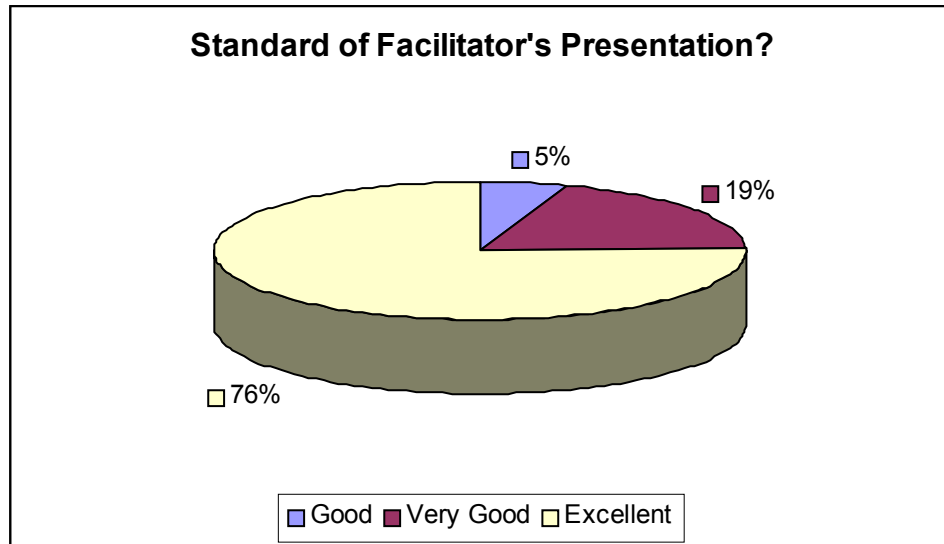
3.10 *How relevant was the course to your job?* As expected the course was very relevant to the majority of the delegates because the course was aimed specifically at Members, Monitoring Officers and relevant Officers.

3.11



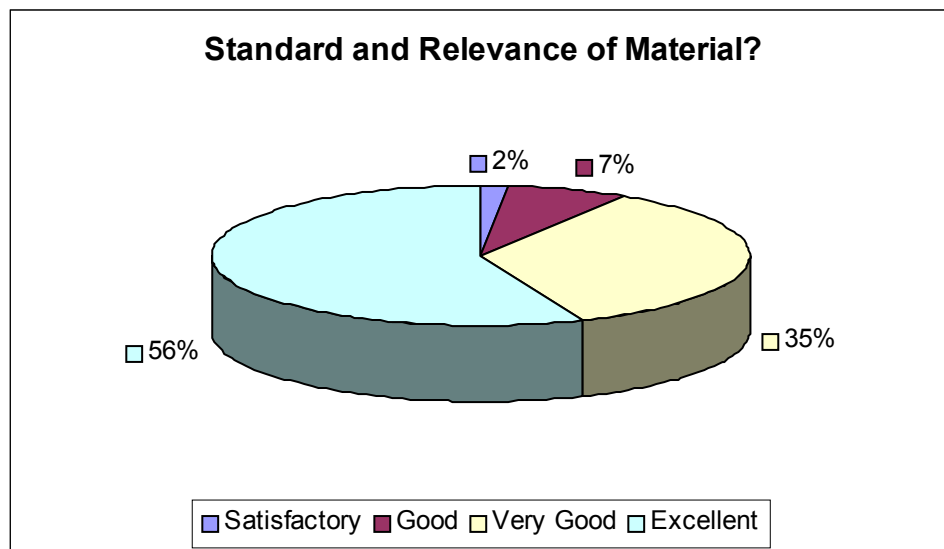
3.12 *Standard of facilitator's presentation?* The standard of the facilitator's presentation was extremely high, 76% of the delegates thought that Peter Keith – Lucas' presentation was excellent.

3.13



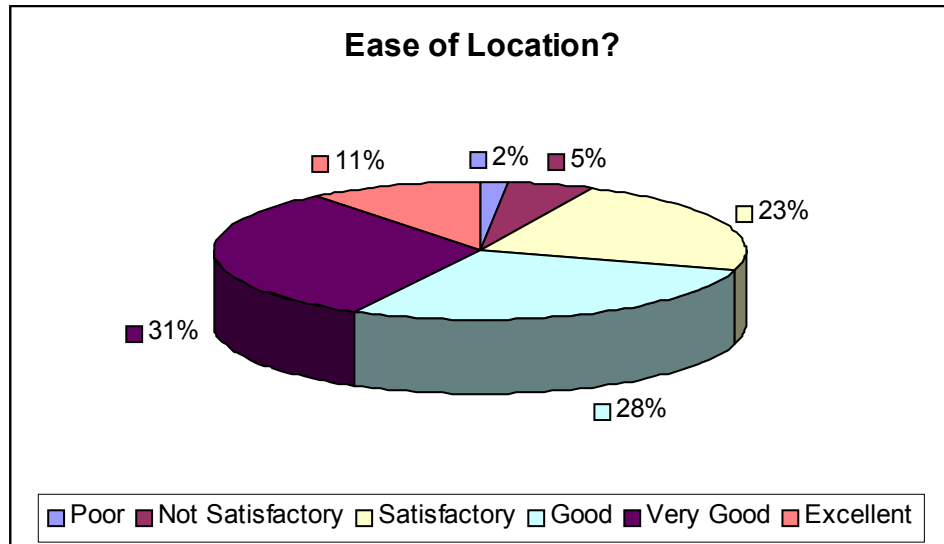
3.14 *Standard and relevance of materials?* Over half of the delegates agreed that the standard and relevance of the material was outstanding. As shown below the remaining delegates were more than satisfied with the material.

3.15



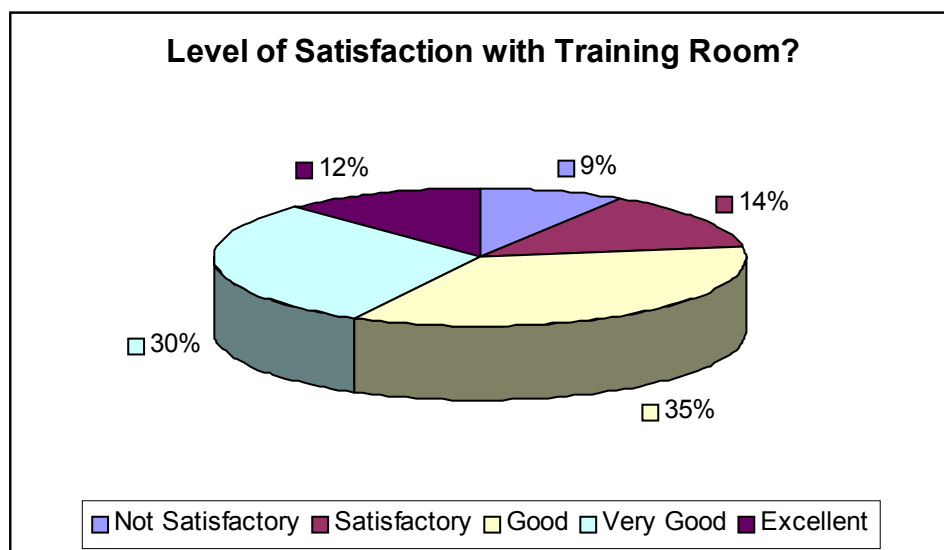
3.16 *Ease of access to location?* A minority of the delegates, 7% were not satisfied with the location of the leisure centre. The reason for this could possibly be because the leisure centre is not in a prominent position as it is located within a housing estate. However, the majority were satisfied, and 31% thought that the location was very good.

3.17



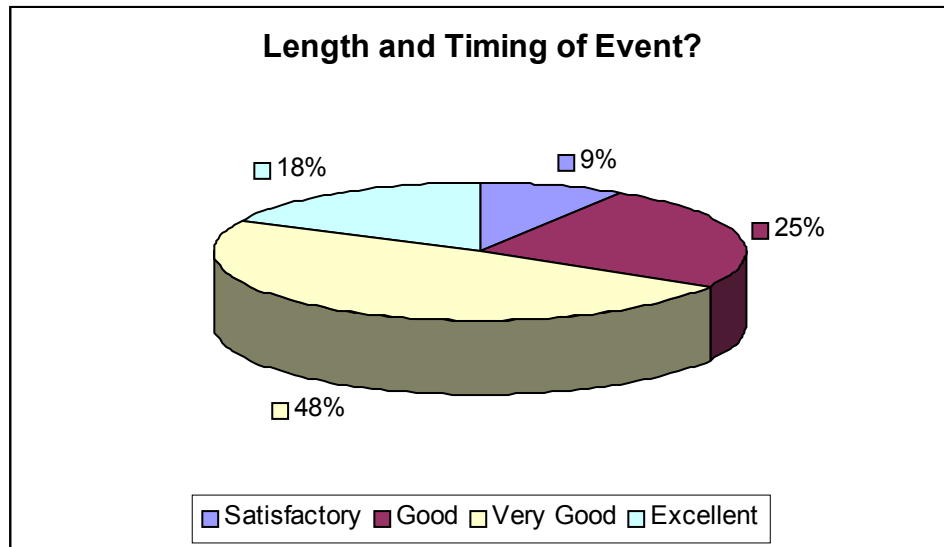
3.18 *Level of satisfaction with training room?* The responses to this question varied from excellent to unsatisfactory. The majority of delegates rated the training room as good, and a further 30% considered the room to be very good. 9% of delegates were not satisfied with the room, and from the comments made on the questionnaire the apparent reason was because the room was cold and the air conditioning was loud.

3.19



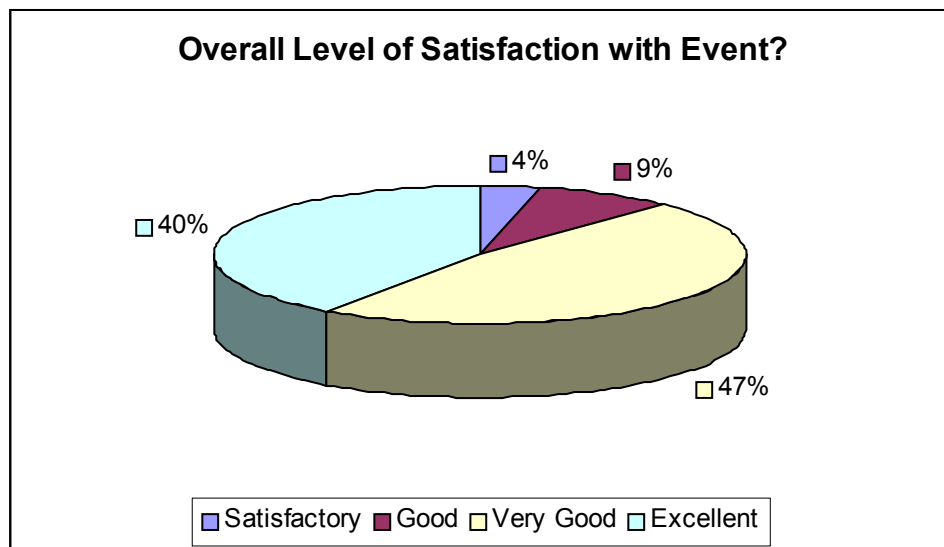
3.20 *Length and timing of event?* The training course was a one-day event, which ran from 10.00 until 4.00, three coffee breaks were arranged and a buffet lunch. The majority of the questionnaires suggested that the event was of the right time and length and the day was handled well regarding time management. However, several delegates thought that the event, both the morning and afternoon sessions could have been condensed.

3.21



3.22. *Overall level of satisfaction with event?* As the figures show below, the event was a huge success with over 80% expressing a high level of overall satisfaction.

3.23



3.24 **Comments:** The majority of the questionnaires contained positive feedback and comments. Some of the comments included:

- Course trainer extremely knowledgeable and handled day well as regards to time management and questions.
- A very useful course for Standards Committee Members and those who support the Committee.
- Course was well thought out and relevant.
- Very good information, presented in an enjoyable manner.
- Listening to real examples brought the importance of this work home.
- Well-balanced training day.

- I thought the course was excellent.
- Excellent, very interesting and different (mock hearing).

3.25 Several suggestions were made to further improve the event, including:

- A different scenario if repeated locally.
- A more detailed analysis of case studies.
- Present to Parish Councillors as a training day.
- More time should have been spent on interests.
- Morning session should be shortened.

#### **4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 No specific financial implications have been identified.

#### **5. CONSULTATIONS**

5.1 The Council's Management Team has considered this report.

#### **6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 All material considerations have been taken into account in the contents of this report. In particular, risks may arise unless Members of Council are fully appraised on standards matters.

#### **7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None apply.

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**Wards:** N/A

**Key Decision Validation:** N/A

#### **Background Papers**

Evaluation Questionnaires: 4<sup>th</sup> April Training Event

**Examination by Statutory Officers**

|   | <b>Yes</b>               | <b>Not<br/>Applicable</b> |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. The report has been examined by the Council’s Head of the Paid Service or his representative | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 2. The content has been examined by the Council’s S.151 Officer or his representative           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 3. The content has been examined by the Council’s Monitoring Officer or his representative      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 4. The report has been approved by Management Team  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |