

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Standards Committee** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 29 May 2012 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor D Winter (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors P Charlton (Vice-Chairman), J Armstrong, A Bainbridge, E Bell, C Carr, D Farry, G Holland, J Shiell and D J Southwell

Mr JG Armstrong, Mrs D Balmer, Mr J Hitchman, Mrs T Naples and Parish Councillors M Goyns and D Liversidge

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillor Terry Batson, independent member Mr D Balls, Councillor Sam Zair and Police Authority representatives Mr W Ault and Mr P Thompson

Also Present:

Mrs E Davies – Police Authority

1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 February 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 Declarations of Interest, if any

There were no declarations of interest received.

3 Performance Report for 2011/12: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions - Report of Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services, the purpose of which was to present performance in relation to complaints, compliments and suggestions for quarter 4 and year end for the financial year 2011/12 and to highlight any learning outcomes resulting from them.

In addition the report provided an update in relation to developments in the collection, monitoring and management of complaints (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Service Development Manager was in attendance to deliver the report and an overview presentation of the statutory, non statutory and Local Government Ombudsman complaints received throughout the period (for copy of slides see file of Minutes).

In response to a question from a member, the Service Development Manager advised of the circumstances when compensation would be paid to a complainant and the associated criteria.

The Service Development Manager also advised on the timetable for the garden waste scheme.

It was acknowledged that issues regarding the Council's telephone systems were successfully being addressed and any remaining issues were being dealt with.

The Chair commented that she felt a lot of progress had been made with input from the Standards Committee, in addressing issues with the handling of, and responding to, complaints and the work of the Corporate Complaints team was acknowledged.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

4 The Localism Act 2011 - The Amended Standards Regime - Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, which provided an update on the steps being taken to introduce a new Code of Conduct with effect from 1 July 2012 (for copy see file of Minutes).

In presenting the report the Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that until such time as the regulations on disclosable personal interests were released any new Code could not be published, however it was envisaged that the new Code would be prepared in time for the 1 July 2012.

Members were also aware that the current composition of the Standards Committee would cease to exist from 1 July 2012. The Chair therefore thanked all members of the Committee for the work undertaken and the progression made in promoting and maintaining the ethical standards of the authority.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

5 Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information.

Resolved:

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the said Act.

6 Monitoring Officers Other Action in relation to complaint LA185 - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

The Committee considered a report following allegations that a County Councillor had contravened the Code of Conduct. The Assessment Sub-Committee of the Standards Committee had determined that it did not merit a formal investigation and therefore the Monitoring Officer met with the Councillor to advise on future conduct (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

7 Update on the handling of Current Complaints - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided an update report in respect of complaints of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

8 Review of Completed Complaints

Members of the Committee inspected a sample of completed complaints, comments and compliment files for the review period in question.