

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

At a Meeting of **Standards Committee** held in Committee Room 1A - County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 25 June 2013** at **9.30 am**

**Present:** **Councillor J Armstrong(Chairman)**

#### **Members of the Standards Committee:**

Councillors J Clark, B Graham, E Huntington, I Jewell, B Stephens and M Williams.

Town Councillor A Cooke.

#### **Apologies:**

Mr J Dixon-Dawson and Councillors E Bell, M Dixon and G Holland.

#### **Also in Attendance:**

Mr P Jackson

#### **1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 February 2013**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 February 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3 Future Reporting Arrangements for Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions**

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Chief Executive and the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services. The report outlined proposals for aligning the reporting of complaints, compliments and suggestions from Standards Committee to Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee, linked to wider performance management reporting and following consideration by Constitution Working Group (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Deputy Monitoring Officer detailed the report, advising that the Standards Committee would continue to hold responsibility for Code of Conduct complaints, as well as continuing to be responsible for approving and making payments or provide other benefits in cases of maladministration as determined by the Local Government Ombudsman.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**4 Changes regarding the Local Government Ombudsman**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, which detailed the new operational arrangements which were to be implemented by the Local Government Ombudsman (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**5 Members Acting for Developers**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which sought the approval of a briefing note to be circulated to all Councillors which provided advice to Members acting for developers (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Resolved:**

That the briefing note be approved for circulation to all Members.

**6 Probity in Planning – New Guidance issued by the Local Government Association**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which informed Members of guidance recently published by the Local Government Association relating to Probity in Planning (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the report, highlighting key areas where the new guidance would require the current Code of Practice within the Council's Constitution, to be revised.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**7 Other Business**

The Chairman advised the Committee that Article 9 of the Council's Constitution provided for the Standards Committee to appoint a Parish and Town Councils Sub Committee. The remit of the Sub Committee was to support Parish and Town Councillors and their Clerks in maintaining high standards of conduct, whether through training or otherwise, and for this purpose to maintain close links with the County Durham Association of Local Councils.

The Sub Committee was to comprise of 3 Members from the Standards Committee and as such nominations to the Sub Committee were sought.

**Resolved:**

That the Chairman of the Committee (Councillor J Armstrong), Councillor I Jewell and Town Councillor AJ Cooke, be appointed to the Parish and Town Council Sub Committee, to discharge duties in accordance with section 9.04 of Article 9 of the Council's Constitution.

**8 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 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.

**9 Monitoring Officer Other Action – Complaints involving Members at a Town Council**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which informed of the outcome of action taken following the determination of several complaints against Members at a Town Council (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**10 Local Investigation – Case Reference LA175**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which detailed the investigation conducted into an allegation that a Town Councillor had breached the Code of Conduct and informed of the outcome of the subsequent hearing (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**11 Update on the Handling of Current Complaints**

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.