



STANDARDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

1. INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR OF THE STANDARDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- 1.1 I have pleasure in presenting the first Annual Report of the new Standards Advisory Committee. This report will straddle the end of the previous Standards Committee and the introduction of this new Committee covering the period from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Localism Act 2011 (the Act) completely removed the old Standards Regime with effect from the 1 July 2012. Under the Act there remained a duty to maintain high standards of conduct and to adopt a Code of Conduct and to have arrangements in place to deal with complaints of breach of the Code.
- 2.2 The Standards Committee was instrumental in considering proposals for a new Standards Framework. At its meeting on 12 June 2012 the Standards Committee agreed new arrangements for adoption by Council. The arrangements closely followed those already in place as it was generally agreed that they had served the Council well for many years. The Council adopted the new Code of Conduct and the Arrangements at its meeting on 4 July 2012.
- 2.3 Although the statutory requirement to have a Standards Committee has been removed, an advisory committee model has been adopted which retains the independent membership of the previous committee to help strengthen public confidence in the system. All the existing Independent Members kindly agreed to remain on the Committee.
- 2.4 The Act included a duty to appoint an Independent Person. The Council appointed Mr Mike Sawford as the Independent Member at its meeting on 22nd January 2013. The appointment is for an initial term of 12 months, commencing from 22nd January with authority delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of The Standards Advisory Committee, to extend the appointment for up to a further three years.

3. MEMBERS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

3.1 The Standards Advisory Committee comprises of five independent members, two Town or Parish Councillors and three Borough Councillors.

3.2 In 2012/13 the Independent members received an annual allowance as follows:-

- Chair: £2,589
- Independent members: £647.04
- Independent Person: £647.04

3.3 The level of allowances was reviewed by the Council's Independent Review Panel in 2012. It recommended that a further review of the allowances be undertaken in 2014 when the impact of the changes to the regime become clearer.

3.4 The Members of the Committee for 2012/13 were:

Independent Members

Ms Julie Miller (Chair)
Mr Stuart Kilpatrick
Mr Brian Christie
Mr Phil Carter
Mr Lloyd Landry

Town/Parish Representatives

Mr Neil Matthew (Town/Parish Council)
1 Vacancy

Borough Councillors

Councillor Scott Edwards
Councillor Ruth Groome
Councillor Ellie Manns

3.5. The existing Independent Members of the Standards Committee kindly agreed to continue as members of the new Standards Advisory Committee.

3.6. The Independent Member not a member of the Standards Advisory Committee but is entitled to receive copies of the agenda attend meetings of the Committee.

4. ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE STANDARDS/STANDARDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE DURING 2012/13

4.1. The Standards Committee met twice in 2012 to consider the key issue of the changes to the Standards Framework. The Standards Advisory Committee has met on two occasions and has considered reports on the role of the Independent Person, including a protocol defining the relationship between the Statutory Officers Group the Committee and the Independent Person.

4.2. The Committee has reviewed the adoption of the Code of Conduct by Town and Parish Councils and the Register of Members Interests for Borough and Town and Parish Councillors.

4.3. The Committee has also received updates on the new Regime.

5. COMPLAINTS

5.1 The table below summarises the complaints received and concluded in the year 2011/2012, not previously reported to the Committee prior to the change in the arrangements

Reference	Date Received	Council Member	Date assessed	Action
SC2011/06	4/04/2011	Borough	26/5/2011 Reviewed 5/8/2011	No action
SC2011/07	21/07/2011	Borough	11/08/2011	Training undertaken
SC2011/08	5/08/2011	Borough	Referred to Standards for England.	Case did not proceed to Referrals Sub Committee
SC2011/09	5/08/2011		Referred to Standards for England	No action
SC2011/10	5/08/2011	Borough	Referred to Standards for England	No action
SC2011/11	5/08/2011	Borough		Withdrawn

5.2 The Monitoring Officer did not receive any formal complaints under the new arrangements from its adoption on 4 July to 31 March and to date.

5.3 The Monitoring Officer has advised the Town and Parish Councils on issues relating to the Code of Conduct and other matters, however to date no formal complaints have been received.

6. TRAINING

6.1 There has been no formal training undertaken for Members of the Borough or Town and Parish Councils on the new Standards

Framework during the period. Training is planned in early December 2013.

- 6.2 Members have been provided with updates on the new Code by the Monitoring Officer on relevant issues including Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Council Tax and Government Guidance on Openness and Transparency. The Standards Advisory Committee has also issued Councillors with Information on the Code of Conduct.
- 6.3 The Monitoring Officer and Mike Sawford (IP) attended an external workshop on the role of the Independent Person.