

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A meeting of Standards Committee was held on 18 July 2008.

PRESENT: G Fell (Chair)
Councillors Carter, Davison, C Hobson, Khan, Lowes, McPartland
and Taylor
Independent Member: C Nestor
Parish Council Members: Councillors I Bruce and B Macmillan

OFFICIALS: M Braithwaite, C Davies and R G Long

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Dunne

****DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

There were no declarations of interest for this meeting.

****MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 10 June 2008 were approved as a correct record.

CORPORATE COMPLAINTS MONITORING

The Members' Office Manager presented a report in respect of the second half-yearly report for 2007/2008 in regard to the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. Appendix 1 to the report provided a breakdown of complaints: by department; complaints dealt with by other organisations or providers and those dealt with by the authority at each of the three different stages together with their outcomes and time-scales for completion. A total of 236 complaints were received for the period 1 October 2007 to 31 March 2008 compared with 224 for the first half yearly period.

222 cases were dealt with by way of the Corporate Complaints Procedures:

189 were completed at Stage 1,
24 at Stage 2,
5 at Stage 3 and
4 complaints were dealt with via the Ombudsman.

Of the 216 cases dealt with by the Council, 128 were upheld, 32 were partly upheld and 52 were not upheld. 1 complaint was withdrawn and 3 were cancelled.

Details of the 89 compliments received via the complaints procedures, as previously requested by Members, were also submitted together with details of a recent user satisfaction survey to test complainants' satisfaction with the way in which their complaints had been handled. Of the 163 questionnaires issued, 46 responses, equating to a 28% response rate, were received.

As the report was only the second produced following full launch of the system it was suggested that it was too early to identify meaningful trends.

NOTED

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

ORDERED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 7C of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND CODE OF CONDUCT INVESTIGATION - CASE REFERENCE NO. SBE 20235.07

The Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer following investigation of a complaint against a Councillor, case reference SBE 20235.07, in relation to an allegation that the Councillor had breached the Council's Code of Conduct which had been referred by the Standards Board for England for local investigation. A copy of the final report of the investigation had been circulated to the Standards Board, the complainant and the Councillor concerned.

The Monitoring Officer advised the committee that based on the facts set out in the report, the committee could either:

- agree with the finding of the report or
- decide that the Councillor did have a case to answer.

If the committee agreed that the Code of Conduct had not been breached then the Council would need to publish a notice to that effect, subject to a request from the Councillor to which the complaint referred requesting that such notice should not be published. The investigating officer concluded that there was not sufficient evidence to support the complaint. In the event that the committee did not concur with the finding of the report, the matter would be referred to the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee for a full hearing.

ORDERED that the finding made by the investigating officer that there was insufficient evidence to indicate that the member had breached the code be supported and, therefore, the matter should not be referred to the Hearings Sub-Committee.