

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Standards Committee was held on 7 December 2010.

**PRESENT:** C Nestor, (Chair).  
Councillors Carter, C Hobson, Junier, McPartland, Purvis (substitute for Councillor Taylor) and Sanderson  
Independent Member: Prof. B Footitt  
Parish Council Member: Councillor R Macmillan

**OFFICERS:** M Braithwaite, C Davies, R G Long and D Robinson.

**\*\* APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Elder and Taylor and C Morrish and Ms J Kidd.

### APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

At his first meeting as the new Chair of the Committee Mr Nestor, sought nominations for the appointment of a new Vice-Chair.

Moved and Seconded and **ORDERED** that Professor Brian Footitt be appointed as Vice-Chair for the remainder of the current Municipal Year.

### \*\*DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this point of the meeting.

### \*\* MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 7 September 2010 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE – INDEPENDENT MEMBERS APPOINTMENT

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services reported that Mr Chris Nestor and Ms Joanne Kidd had been appointed as Independent Members of the committee at the Council meeting held on 27 October 2010. Council also approved Mr Nestor's appointment as Chair of the Standards Committee together with the following appointments to the committee's sub-committees:

Standards (Initial Assessment) Sub-Committee – Mr Chris Nestor (Chair)  
Standards (Review) Sub-Committee – Professor Brian Footitt (Chair)  
Standards (Hearings) Sub-Committee – Ms Joanne Kidd (Chair)

The Director also referred to correspondence from the former Chair (Geoff Fell) thanking members and officers for their assistance during his period as Chair of the Committee.

**NOTED**

### STANDARDS COMPLAINTS 2009/2010

The Members' Office Manager submitted a report setting out details of the 19 complaints received and considered against 11 different councillors by the various Standards Sub-Committees during the year 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.

**NOTED**

### ABOLITION OF THE STANDARDS BOARD REGIME

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services tabled copies of letters received from Robert Chilton, Chair of Standards for England and Bob Neill, Minister for Local Government outlining proposals for the future of standards in local government. The proposal intend to abolish Standards for England; remove jurisdiction over member conduct from the First Tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England); remove the national Code of Conduct for councillors

and remove the requirement to appoint standards committees. Councils would be able to choose whether or not they wish to have a local code or a standards committee. The new standards committee would be unable to suspend a member and a new criminal offence would be created to deal with situations where members fail to register or declare interests. Full details of the proposals will be set out the Decentralisation and Localism Bill which was expected to receive Royal Assent during summer/autumn 2011. Transitional arrangements will also be introduced to deal with cases that may be on-going prior to the start of the Appointed Day for the new arrangements.

In discussion Members view generally was that full abolition of the Standards regime was a retrograde step and acknowledged that some authorities, especially authorities with large numbers of parish councils had encountered problems with tit for tat reporting. The Director sought Members' views as to whether or not officers should commence a review of the current criteria pending further clarification of future processes. On balance it was felt that further work at this stage was premature. It was also felt that any future committee should have more powers available to them than just the ability to censure a Member for misconduct.

**NOTED**