

# **STANDARDS COMMITTEE AGENDA**



**Tuesday 20 October 2009**

**at 4.00 p.m.**

**in Committee Room C,  
Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

**MEMBERS: STANDARDS COMMITTEE:**

Councillors Coward, Fleet, Lauderdale, Preece, Shaw, Simmons and Turner

Co-opted Members: Barry Gray and Ted Jackson.

Parish Councillors: Ray Gilbert (Elwick Parish Council), and Alan Bell (Hart Parish Council).

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 3. MINUTES**
  - 3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2009.
- 4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006**

## **EXEMPT ITEMS**

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

**5. ITEMS FOR DECISION**

- 5.1 Consideration of an Investigation Report into an Alleged Breach of the Members' Code of Conduct – *Chief Solicitor (Para 1)*

**6. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT**

# **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

15 September 2009

The meeting commenced at 4.00 p.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

**Present:**

Barry Gray (In the Chair)

Councillors John Coward, Mary Fleet, John Lauderdale, Arthur Preece, Jane Shaw, Chris Simmons and Mike Turner.

Parish Councillor: Ray Gilbert.

Officers: Peter Devlin, Chief Solicitor  
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

### **5. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from independent member Ted Jackson

### **6. Declarations of interest by members**

None.

### **7. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2009**

The minutes of 28<sup>th</sup> July 2009 were confirmed as a true record

### **8. Role and Remit – Standards Committee** *(Chief Solicitor)*

The Chief Solicitor advised that part of the work programme for Constitution Committee and Working Group for this municipal year was a consideration of direct reporting mechanisms of Standards Committee to Council, of which at the moment there are none. The report detailed the current remit of Standards Committees and possible changes to that remit which members were asked to give their views upon. Their comments would then be reported back to Constitution Working Group and Committee for further consideration.

Members discussed the proposed changes in detail. In terms of a suggested code of conduct for employees members queried why this was not yet available given that the member equivalent had been in place for a number of years. The Chief Solicitor advised that a code of conduct for officers had been included as part of 'Single Status' but that it did not have statutory force at this

time. Staff conditions of service tended to cover similar ground to a formal code of conduct. The Chair felt that training on an officer code of conduct should be available to members of Standards Committee. The Chief Solicitor indicated there had been a number of training events in the Tees Valley area. However members were not in favour of this training being made compulsory. Concerns were also raised by members relating to a possible conflict of interest should they be asked to sit in judgement on an officer with whom they might have a working relationship. However it was felt that this was not a problem when considering complaints made against members. Also General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) Committee regularly made decisions on the conduct of officers with no feeling of conflict of interest.

Members also queried the inclusion of monitoring of the Council's anti-fraud and corruption policy so far as it relates to the actions of members of the council, and the implied omission of officers. The Chief Solicitor reported that there was already a statutory provision covering officers but no real defined coverage for members, hence the distinction. Should members wish to incorporate officers in this recommendation then the same could be accommodated.

Members asked for more information on the Annual Governance Statement. The Chief Solicitor advised that this was a document which identified all the key elements of governance that should be operating within Hartlepool Borough Council, with a review of current procedures and recommendations thereon. Members felt this was something they should be aware of.

In terms of the recommendations as a whole, members were content to agree them in principle. Standards Committee was a reactionary body and would therefore only be able to act upon these recommendations as and when required.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted and the comments of members reported back to Constitution Working Group and Committee

## **9. Any other items which the Chairman considers are urgent**

The Chief Solicitor informed members that an Independent Chairs of Standards Committee meeting was due to take place in Eston on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009. The Vice-Chair would be attending on the Chair's behalf. Concerns were raised regarding the poor response to advertisements for independent members. The Chief Solicitor noted that the 2 individuals who had previously responded had been unable to procure the necessary approval from Council. Possible incentives including more flexible meeting times and possible remuneration were put forward.

The meeting concluded at 4.45 p.m.

CHAIRMAN