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**KIRKLEES COUNCIL**  
**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday 28 April 2010**

Present: Councillors Hardcastle, C Smith and K Smith

Co-opted Members: Mr P Blythe (in the Chair), Councillor M Barlow,  
Councillor C Kaye, Councillor P Cunnington and Professor A Kitson

Apologies: Councillor Patrick and Mr D J Binns

**1 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 March 2010 were approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of apologies submitted by Councillors Ridgway, C Smith and K Smith and Professor Kitson.

**2 Interests**

No interests were declared.

**3 Admission of the Public**

The Committee determined that all business would be considered in public session.

**4 Deputations/Petitions**

No deputations or petitions were received.

**5 Update on Complaints**

The Monitoring Officer provided an update to the Committee on complaints as at April 2010 and circulated a schedule breaking down the complaints by source of complainant and indicating the state of progress on each.

**RESOLVED -**

(1) That the update on complaints be noted.

(2) That the update schedule provided to the Committee should, in future, include a column identifying cases referred to Standards for England.

## **6 Use of Social Media by Councillors and Code of Conduct**

The Acting Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) submitted a report providing a brief overview of the Standards issues raised by the use of social media by individual Councillors, and incorporating a Blogging Quick Guide produced by Standards for England.

The report indicated that the Council had been invited by the Department for Communities and Local Government to be an exemplar authority in taking forward the recommendations of the Councillors Commission looking at the role of Councillor and the incentives and barriers to being a Councillor. As part of the pilot arrangements in Kirklees a key strand of the work involved looking at the information and intelligence that Ward Councillors should have to fulfil their roles and how they could better communicate with their residents; hence, it was important that the transition phase from pilot to rollout was underpinned by sound advice and support.

Work was being undertaken by the Council's Governance Officers to promote the use of social media by Councillors and it was proposed that the approach taken by the Standards Committee to these matters should be co-ordinated with that work.

### **RESOLVED -**

(1) That the Standards for England Blogging Quick Guide be circulated to all Councillors and to Local Parish and Town Councils.

(2) That a report be brought to the Standards Committee when further work has been done on the promotion of the use of social media by Councillors.

## **7 Development of the Standards Materials on the KMC Website**

The Acting Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) submitted a report, briefing the Committee on the current information on the Council's website on Standards matters and suggesting a way forward to improve the way the website could be accessed by members of the public looking for information about Standards matters, through the creation of a web portal for Standards materials on the Council website.

### **RESOLVED -**

(1) That approval be given to creating a web portal for the Standards materials on the Kirklees Council website.

(2) That Professor Alan Kitson be nominated to progress the web portal proposals with Officers.

(3) That a further report be submitted to the Standards Committee when the portal is operational.

## **8 Review of the Role of Function of Standards Committee**

The Acting Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) submitted a report referring to the decision of the Committee on 12 January 2010 to set up a Working Party of Committee Members to review the current role and functions of the Standards Committee. The report incorporated the recommendations which had emerged from the Working Party in terms of a range of issues including term of office for independent members; increasing the size of membership of the Committee; various adjustments to the Committee's terms of reference; production of a media protocol for dealing with press queries about Standards matters; and a systematic approach towards delivering appropriate training to Members and Co-optees, Members of Standards Committee, new Councillors, new Committee Members and Parishes.

### **RESOLVED -**

(1) That the recommendations from the Working Party be noted and supported, subject to an amendment to the recommendation in paragraph 2 (n) of the report, to replace reference to "ethical issues" with "when the Committee's annual report is being discussed".

(2) That the consequential amendments arising to the Council's Constitution and Articles be submitted to Annual Council for approval.

## **9 Promotion of Ethical Standards**

The Acting Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) submitted a report incorporating a paper on ways in which the Committee could support the third principle set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance which states:-

"Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour".

The report sought the Committee's view on what further action the Committee could take to promote values and good governance, for subsequent report to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee as part of that Committee's work on corporate governance.

The submitted paper identified the following areas where there was a role for Standards Committee:-

- Member training for Kirklees Councillors and members of Local Parish and Town Councils.
- Publicity for the Standards complaints process.
- General promotion of the role of the Standards Committee.
- Promotion of ethical standards in partnerships.
- Defining standards of behaviour expected of Members and staff.

**RESOLVED -**

(1) That the report be received.

(2) That, in relation to the section about promoting the role of the Standards Committee, the suggestion for ensuring there is an ethical standards presence at all Council/Committees be not adopted.

(3) That, in relation to the section on publicity for the Standards complaints process:-

- (i) The Committee would want input into the staging of any ethical awareness week.
- (ii) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on options, with potential value for each, for undertaking surveys on perceptions within the Council and among the public, of Standards issues.
- (iii) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the operation of procedures for notifying Parish or Town Councils on the outcome of Standards hearings.
- (iv) That training of Governance Officers on the Code of Conduct be made available so that such staff may offer advice to Committees and the public on the operation of the Standards system.
- (v) That the pocket guide to the Code of Conduct produced by Standards for England be made available at public meetings of the Council and its Committees.

(4) That the training programme on the Code of Conduct should include opportunities for participation by Parish Councillors and Clerks.

(5) That feedback be provided to a future meeting of the Committee on the number of hits on the Kirklees website by the public accessing Code of Conduct and Standards issues.

(6) That the Committee be kept informed of progress of the Kirklees Council's webcasting of its meetings.

**10**

**2010/2011 Work Programme**

During consideration of this item the meeting became inquorate so it was agreed that the provisional list of items suggested by remaining Members in the meeting be reported to the next meeting for consideration, together with the dates of meetings of the Committee in 2010/11 as agreed at Annual Council.

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**Retiring Co-opted Members**

The Committee placed on record its thanks to Councillor Margaret Barlow of Denby Dale Parish Council and Reverend Mike Roberts (Independent Member) for their work and contribution to the Committee during their term of office.