

**SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**ANNUAL REVIEW**

**14<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2009 TO 20<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2010**

## **THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Reverend Paul Lipscomb (Chair)	)	
Mr Fred Ashmore	)	
Mr Mike Field	)	Independent Members
Dr Henna Khan (Vice-Chair)	)	
Councillor Pervez Choudhry	)	
Councillor Brian Hewitt	)	
Councillor David Maclsaac	)	Elected Members
Councillor Mewa Mann	)	
Councillor Azhar Qureshi	)	
Councillor Mohammed Rasib	)	
Britwell Councillor Nicoline Brandlight	)	Parish Council
Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Councillor Laurie Tucker	)	Representatives
Wexham Court Parish Councillor Dalip Rajput	)	

Councillors Latif Khan and James Walsh were originally appointed to the Committee but subsequently stepped down after the first meeting in favour of Councillors Maclsaac and Rasib. Parish Councillors Nicoline Brandlight and Laurie Tucker resigned towards the end of the municipal year and Parish Councillors Alan Tilbury and Howard Jones respectively were appointed in their place and attended the last meeting of the Committee.

The Committee is serviced by Maria Memoli, Acting Borough Secretary and Solicitor and June Cook, the Member Services Manager. Steven Quayle, who had served as the Committee's Monitoring Officer since it was first appointed in May 1999, retired on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.

The Committee is programmed to meet four times a year in public. Committee agenda papers, reports and minutes are available on the Council's website at [www.slough.gov.uk](http://www.slough.gov.uk).

### **Chair's Comments**

The Council set up an Ethical Standards Working Party some ten years ago to commence the development of a suite of Ethical governance documents and to deal with complaints about Member behaviour. After the passing of the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation the current Standards Committee has continued and refined this role and it has come a long way since those early days: from developing and promoting the Council's comprehensive Ethical Framework, hearing and deciding complaints referred to the Monitoring Officer by the Standards Board for England and now handling all complaints locally in a fair but robust manner.

The Committee will continue to review and where necessary revise the Council's comprehensive ethical framework and seek further improvements in the behaviour of Members at Council/Committee meetings.

The new Government's planned 'Decentralisation and Localism Bill' includes a proposal to "abolish the standards regime". We await developments but will continue with business as usual.

Party political considerations will play no part in the work of the Committee or its Sub-Committees and whatever we do will be done with fairness and justice as our guiding principle.

### **What Standards for England Does**

In July 2009, the Standards Board for England, which was established by the Local Government Act 2000 to help build confidence in local democracy, changed its name to Standards for England to emphasis how its role had changed. Its responsibilities now include:

- Giving standards committees and councillors support and guidance on understanding the Code of Conduct, and on how to deal with complaints about the conduct of members of their council or authority
- Monitoring the performance of local authorities in the local assessment of complaints
- Publishing information about how councils and other authorities are dealing with complaints about their members
- Working with standards committees to help them improve if they do not deal with complaints about their members properly
- Removing the power of the standards committee to receive complaints about their members, if it believes it necessary
- Investigating the most serious cases where the local standards committee believes it is not best placed to deal with the matter and it agrees with them

### **What Do We Do ?**

- Promote and maintain high standards of conduct of Borough Councillors, Parish Councillors, Co-opted Members and Diocesan Representatives.
- Monitor the operation of the Council's Ethical Framework.
- Advise and train Councillors on conduct issues, personal and prejudicial interests, bias/predetermination and gifts and hospitality.
- Assess, review and determine complaints about members through Sub-Committees set up by the Committee.
- Give advice and guidance on the "Whistleblowing" Policy and Procedure.
- Monitor the performance of Councillors.
- Monitor the reporting of gifts and hospitality.
- Observe the workings of Council and Parish Council meetings.
- Publish an Annual Review of our work.

- Produce quarterly Monitoring returns to the Standards for England.

## **What Have We Done?**

In 2009/10 we:-

- Reviewed the gifts/hospitality registered by Members during the municipal year 2008/09
- Reviewed the performance of Borough Councillors particularly their attendance at meetings and training and considered ways in which attendance at training could be improved
- Approved the introduction of rolling member attendance reports for individual committees/sub-committees and panels in 2010/11
- Considered the implications of the Standards Committee (Further Provisions) England Regulations 2009 which came into force on 15<sup>th</sup> June
- Continued the training of Standards committee members on the assessment, review and determination of complaints
- Reviewed and confirmed the format and content of the Committee's Annual Review document
- Approved the issues and criteria to be considered when granting dispensations to allow members to vote when they have a personal and prejudicial interest and amended its terms of reference to allow the appointment of a sub-committee to consider such dispensations
- Continued to review and update the Committee's work programme
- Through its sub-committees assessed 12 member complaints and determined 1. As part of the determination process made a number of recommendations regarding administrative practices in place in Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council

The number of complaints has significantly increased this year

<b>Complaints Received</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Assessed</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Reviewed</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>No Further Action</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Referred for Investigation</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Determined</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Breach</b>	<b>1</b>

## **THE FUTURE**

Our main consideration as the new municipal year starts is the direction the new Government will take in respect of the current standards regime and the impact on it of future legislation.

We will continue to develop the Council's ethical framework documentation and ensure that it complies with best practice.

In summary we will:-

- Review the Council's Member and Officer Relations Code.
- Consider the data gathered during 2009/10 under the Member's performance monitoring arrangements and the registration of gifts and hospitality.
- Continue to provide training and development on the provisions of the Code of Conduct and the assessment, review and determination of complaints.
- Continue and extend our work with the Parish Councils.
- Draw up an informal reconciliation/mediation process to aid the early resolution of complaints.

### **The Future of the Standards for England**

The Standards for England are reviewing their activities and updating their Business Plans.

For further information please contact: Maria Memoli  
Acting Borough Secretary & Solicitor  
Tel: 01753 875004  
e-mail: maria.memoli@slough.gov.uk