

**SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**ANNUAL REVIEW**

**APRIL 2007 TO MARCH 2008**

**THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Reverend Paul Lipscomb (Chair)	)	
Mr Fred Ashmore	)	
Mr Mike Field	)	Independent Members
Dr Henna Khan	)	
Councillor Mohammed Aziz	)	
Councillor Sukjhit Dhaliwal	)	
Councillor John Finn	)	Elected Members
Councillor Latif khan	)	
Councillor Mewa Mann	)	
Councillor Patricia O'Connor	)	
Councillor Nicoline Brandlight		Parish Council Representative

Dr Henna Khan replaced Mr Zahir Khan (Independent Member) and attended her first meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

The Committee is serviced by Steven Quayle, Monitoring Officer and June Cook the Member Services Manager.

The Committee meets at least 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**

It hardly seems possible that nine years have passed since the Council set up its Ethical Standards Working Party, the precursor of the current Standards Committee. The Committee has come a long way since those early days: from developing and promoting the Council’s comprehensive Ethical Framework to hearing and deciding complaints referred to the Monitoring Officer by the Standards Board for England.

We anticipate the imminent introduction of new legislation which will enable almost all complaints about the conduct of Members to be handled locally from beginning to end. This means that the Standards Committee through its Sub-Committees will decide itself whether a complaint warrants an investigation or other action. This change of emphasis is welcome and it means that the Standards Board will now be a “light touch regulator” taking a more strategic view of ethical issues across local government.

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.

Needless to say 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 the Standards Board Does**

The Standards Board was established by the Local Government Act 2000 to help build confidence in local democracy by:-

- Promoting high standards of ethical behaviour.
- Overseeing and promoting the Code of Conduct.
- Receiving and investigating complaints and misconduct referred to it by local Standards Committees
- Providing national guidance to Councillors, local Standards Committees and Council Monitoring Officers.

It is now regarded as the 'strategic regulator' of ethical issues within local government.

### **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 and gifts and hospitality.
- Assess, review and determine complaints 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 Councils meetings.

### **What Have We Done?**

In 2007/08 we:-

- responded to the Government's consultation paper on the Order and Regulations relating to the Conduct of Local Authority Members.
- reviewed the performance of Borough Councillors particularly the attendance at meetings.
- arranged for Independent Members to observe Borough and Parish Council meetings and report back to the Committee.
- noted the adoption of the new Local Code of Conduct for Members and the Standard's Board for England's Statutory Guidance.

- Continued to review and update our work programme.
- Conducted a hearing in respect of a complaint made against a Councillor and determined what action should be taken through the Standards (Local Determination) Sub-Committee.

The number of complaints determined by the Sub-Committee declined last year and the details are set out below:-

<b>Year</b>	<b>Complaints</b>	<b>Referred for Investigations</b>	<b>No Further Action</b>	<b>Breach</b>
2007/08	13	1	12	0

Three of the complaints related to the conduct of Parish Councillors but none were investigated.

### **THE FUTURE**

It is anticipated that much of our work for the municipal year 2008/09 will be concerned with the implementation of the new local standards regime which will give the Standards Committee and its Sub-Committees control in the handling of all complaints about the conduct of Members from beginning to end. There will be substantial constitutional issues to address and the setting up of the Sub-Committees which will decide whether complaints are to be investigated or not or whether some other action is appropriate.

In addition 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 Employee Code of Conduct.
- Consider the data gathered during 2007/08 under the Member's performance monitoring arrangements.
- Provide further training and development on the new provisions of the Local Code of Conduct by more scenario based training.
- Continue our work with the Parish Councils.
- Draw up an informal reconciliation/mediation process to aid the early resolution of complaints.
- Set up a Standards Committee web page.

For further information please contact:: Steven Quayle, Monitoring Officer  
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