

The Report of the Standards Committee

The Standards Committee met on Monday 23 April 2012.

Present:-Henry Cronin – Independent Member (Chairman).

County Councillors Philip Barrett, David Jeffels, J W Marshall, Peter Pople, Peter Sowray and Geoff Webber.

Independent Members: Hilary Bainbridge, Hilary Gilbertson and Dr Janet Holt

1. Local Ethical Framework Developments – The Localism Act 2011

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer in relation to proposed changes to the national standards regime arising out of the Localism Act 2011 and gave their views on appropriate arrangements for the Authority's future local standards' framework.

The Standards Committee RECOMMENDS:

That (a) the Authority's duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct be discharged as listed below and from time to time in such other ways as the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with any Standards Committee established by the Authority, may deem appropriate:-

- (i) Appoint a non-statutory Standards Committee.
 - (ii) Adopt new/revise existing, ethical statements.
 - (iii) Continue to promote ethical issues through planned and monitored Member training, including Member induction training.
 - (iv) Continue to produce Standards Bulletins.
 - (v) Continue to monitor wider policies, protocols and indicators which point to the ethical health of the Authority.
 - (vi) Use of the Authority's website to promote the standards regime ultimately put in place.
 - (vii) Publicise when the new/revised Code and supporting standards regime is established by the Authority and from time to time as appropriate.
 - (viii) Work together with neighbouring authorities, where possible and appropriate, in order to discharge the statutory duty.
- (b) the Council establish a politically balanced Standards Committee (with one named Substitute from each Group) comprising not more than five Members, meeting twice per annum, with a panel of Members from the Committee meeting on an ad hoc basis to deal with any alleged breach of the new Members' Code of Conduct;

- (c) the draft new Members' Code of Conduct for the Council be approved; and that such Code be revised as necessary in the future once the relevant regulations are in force regarding the new statutory interests regime;
- (d) under the new standards regime, Members and voting co-opted Members should be required to sign an undertaking to comply with the Code before acting in such capacity;
- (e) the Council publicise its adoption of the new Code on the Council's website and Intranet and in any other ways the Standards Committee deems appropriate;
- (f) provision be included in the Council Procedure Rules requiring Members to withdraw from the meeting room where they have a disclosable pecuniary interest;
- (g) the complaint handling procedure be approved;
- (h) two Independent Persons be appointed, to be involved on a rota basis;
- (i) the Independent Persons be invited to meetings of the new Standards Committee but not formally co-opted on to the new Committee;
- (j) the Independent Persons be paid expenses in accordance with the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme (1/2 unit plus travel expenses at Member rate and that this be considered by the Independent Remuneration Panel in due course;
- (k) the Independent Person vacancies be advertised on the Council's website and through a press release via the Council's arrangements with the local press (and in any other way the Council considers appropriate) and that the Chairman of the Standards Committee with the Monitoring Officer should undertake short-listing of applicants;
- (l) all functions in respect of the publication of Standards Committee Independent Person vacancies be delegated to the Standards Committee and that the Committee then delegates such functions to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Committee;
- (m) the power to assist in the recruitment of Standards Committee Independent Persons (but not to approve individual appointments) be delegated to the Standards Committee;
- (n) the Monitoring Officer be designated as Proper Officer to receive written requests for a dispensation by Members and voting co-opted Members;
- (o) the power to grant dispensations to Members and voting co-opted Members be delegated to the Standards Committee, after consultation with the Independent Person; and that power be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to grant dispensations (after consultation with the Independent Person) where the timescales are such that a Standards Committee meeting cannot be convened

and where the Monitoring Officer has consulted every available Member of the Standards Committee, all of whom consent to the granting of the dispensation.

County Hall,
NORTHALLERTON.

23 April, 2012

HENRY CRONIN
Chairman