

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

13 September 2010

Standards Committee Complaints –Support for Subject Members

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of arrangements which have been put in place to support Members who are the subject of a complaint to the Standards Committee.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 One of the issues discussed with Group Leaders at the Standards Committee's last meeting in May, was that of support for Members who are the subject of a complaint to the Standards Committee ("subject members"), whilst the complaint process is ongoing. Concern has previously been expressed by subject members that, due to the nature of the complaints process, they can find themselves feeling vulnerable and unsupported during the process.
- 2.2 Members agreed that it would be helpful for subject members to be supported more through the complaints process and to be informed at the outset as to the support available to them.

3.0 SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS

- 3.1 Officers understand that because of the way in which, at the outset of a complaint, they are unable to let subject members have much detail about the complaint (other than the fact that a complaint has been received and by whom, and the paragraphs of the Code alleged to have been breached) until it has gone through the assessment stage, that subject members may feel in a vulnerable position. Further, as, in general, all stages of the complaints process are now handled locally, there are more roles to be covered by officers coupled with a need to avoid any potential conflict of interest and this could lead to subject members feeling unsupported.
- 3.2 The Monitoring Officer has therefore considered the best way to offer increased support to subject members during the complaints process and has arranged for Ruth Gladstone, Principal Committee Administrator, who is very knowledgeable and experienced in relation to the Code of Conduct and standards regime, but not usually involved with the Standards Committee in this authority, to be available to support North Yorkshire County Council Members who find themselves the subject of a complaint to the Committee. Josie O'Dowd, Democratic Services Manager, will act as subject member support where Ruth is unable to. These officers will also be able to provide feedback to the Monitoring Officer as to how the subject member found the process.
- 3.3 Subject members are made aware that the nominated officer is available to guide and support them through the complaints process.
- 3.4 A brief guide for subject Members is also in the process of being prepared and will be brought to a future meeting of the Standards Committee for comments.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 That Members note the contents of this report.

CAROLE DUNN
Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer

Background Papers:

Standards Committee minutes for meetings held in 2009/2010

County Hall
NORTHALLERTON

25 August 2010