

Report to: **Standards Committee**

Date: **25 April 2012**

Title of report: **Annual Report of the Standards Committee**

By: **Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Community Services**

Purpose of report: **To provide an update on Member Conduct issues, the work of the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standards Committee is recommended to

- 1) note the report; and**
 - 2) agree the report for submission to the County Council for consideration.**
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1. Financial Implications

1.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

2. Background information

2.1 In July 2007 the revised Code of Conduct was adopted by the Council, and all Members were offered training on the new Code. Additionally, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 introduced changes to ethical standards, which placed additional responsibility on the Standards Committee locally for dealing with complaints of breach of the Code of Conduct.

2.2 In December 2008 the Standards Committee agreed the assessment criteria that would provide additional support and guidance for the assessment and review Sub-Committees when considering complaints.

2.3 Between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012 there was one complaint received against a Member of the County Council (see Appendix 1). The complaint was considered by the Assessment Sub Committee. It was decided that there may have been a potential breach of the Code but that further investigation was not appropriate as the public interest in investigating the complaint would be outweighed by the cost and resources that would be likely to be involved. The Sub Committee decided that the matter should be referred to the Monitoring Officer for other action.

2.4 Following a request for a review of a decision made by the Assessment Sub Committee in March 2011, the Review Sub Committee met once during 2011/12. The Review Sub Committee decided that no action should be taken in relation to the alleged misconduct. The decision notices are attached under agenda item 1.

2.5 It is considered that the standards of conduct among Members and co-opted members of the Council remain high and maintaining good standards is taken seriously. There was only one case considered by the Assessment Sub-Committee in the period covered by this report, in comparison to two in 2010/11 and 4 in 2009/10.

3. Applications for Dispensation

3.1 In limited circumstances, Members can apply in writing to the Standards Committee for dispensations to take part in business that they would otherwise have been unable to participate in through having prejudicial interests. During 2011/12 there were no applications for dispensations.

3.2 All dispensations are entered on the register of Members' interests and remain there for the appropriate period, normally for 4 years from the date on which they were granted, or (if shorter) until the date fixed by the Committee granting the dispensation.

4. Register of Members' Interests

4.1 The Monitoring Officer is required to establish and maintain a register of interests of Members of the Council. All Members have completed and returned their registers and are reminded every six months of the need to notify the Monitoring Officer of any changes. The registers are available for public inspection and are available on the Council's website.

4.2 A register of Gifts and Hospitality is also maintained by the Monitoring Officer. During the period of this report nine Members have had cause to register one or more gifts and hospitality received with an estimated value of £25 or more.

4.3 There is an ongoing requirement to keep the information up to date. Councillors must within 28 days of becoming aware of any new registerable personal interest or change to any registered interest, give written notification to the Monitoring Officer.

5. Training

5.1 Members were offered training on the Code of Conduct in June 2009. In the past the Committee has acknowledged the need for further Code of Conduct training for Councillors. Training will be offered to councillors regarding the changes to the standards regime and the new Local Code of Conduct once the Code, local assessment criteria etc have been agreed.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The Committee is recommended to note the report and to recommend to County Council the Annual Report of the Standards for consideration.

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Contact Officer – Andy Cottell, Democratic Services Manager (01273 481955)

Local Members: All

Background Documents: None

Appendix 1

Complaints received by the Standards Committee 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012

Reference	Date Received	Type and Date of Sub Committee	Complainant	Summary of Complaint	Assessment Outcome	Review Outcome	Resolved
SC.001.11	20 January 2011 (Initial) 13 April 2011 (Review)	Review 12 May 2011	Member of the public	Disrespectful and failed to address the points raised in an email.	No further action	No further action	Yes
SC.002.11	7 July 2011	Assessment 27 July 2011	Member of the public	Disrespectful and failed to respond to letters	Referred to Monitoring Officer for other action		Yes