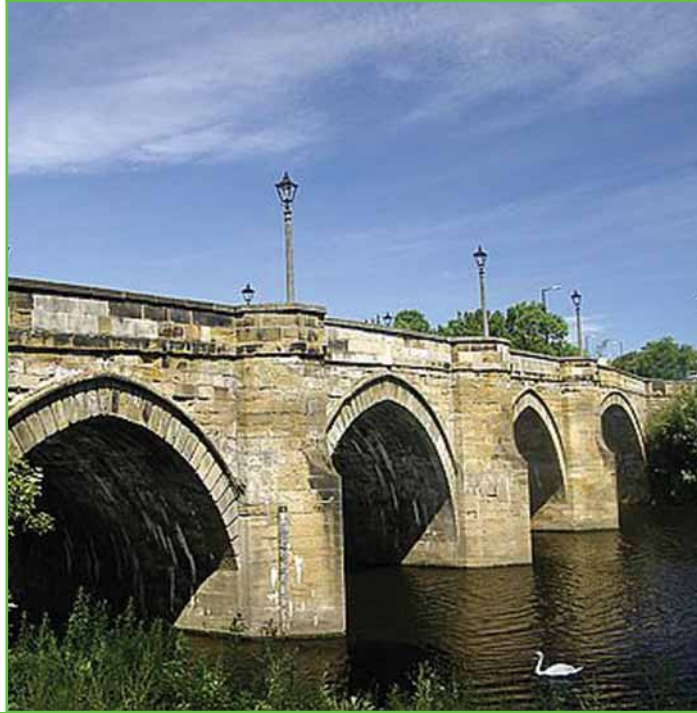


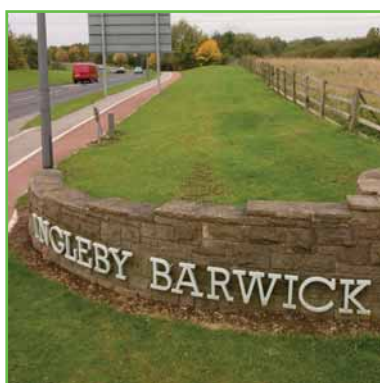
The Standards Committee Annual Report 2009/10



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL



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Foreword

At the time of writing the Standards Committee has no case under consideration.

This is a testament to the high standards of conduct of Members of the Borough and Parish Councils.

Thanks to the arrangements made by the Council to meet the procedural requirements for local assessment and determination the Council has carried out this work within the prescribed timescales without undue difficulty. I believe the Committee has proved effective in the work it has done.

This report shows the scope of the Committee's work beyond the core function. This has come about gradually, reflecting organisational developments within the Council and the growing maturity of the Standards Committee. It is not a process that can be forced or which is amenable to prescription.

The "extended role" benefits the Council and the Committee by increasing the Committee's understanding of the functions and processes of the Borough and Parish Councils so deepening the experience and understanding Members can bring to the core function of the Committee.

During the year the terms of office of the three Independent Members of the Committee expired. Freda Robinson retired. Edna Chapman and I were reappointed. Michael Armstrong joined the Committee as Vice-Chair. I am please to record thanks to Freda for her work on the Committee and to Edna for her work as the previous Vice-Chair.

Looking ahead, there is work to be done to raise public awareness of the Committee and its work. The Committee is already embarked upon it.

As ever my thanks are due to David Bond and his team for the service that enables the Committee to perform its functions in an atmosphere of calm and order. My thanks to the Group Leaders, the Cabinet Member and the Chief Executive for the helpful discussions we have had through the year.

Finally, my thanks are due to all the Members of the Committee for their commitment to the work of the Committee over the past year.



Francis W Hayes
Independent Chair
Standards Committee



Michael Armstrong
Independent Vice-Chair
Standards Committee



1. Introduction

This is the fifth Annual Report of the Standards Committee. This report again provides an overview of the work of the Committee in the past year, and aims to promote examples of best practice. The Committee's previous Annual Reports can be accessed at

<http://sbcinternet/yourcouncil/standprob/standcomm/>

2. The Standards Committee

2.1 Function

The Standards Committee's general functions are:-

- (a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by the Members and co-opted Members of the authority; and
- (b) assisting Members and co-opted Members of the authority to observe the authority's code of conduct.

The Committee's specific functions are:-

- (a) advising the authority on the adoption or revision of a code of conduct;
- (b) monitoring the operation of the authority's code of conduct; and
- (c) advising, training or arranging to train Members and co-opted Members of the authority on matters relating to the authority's code of conduct.

The Committee's general and specific functions apply to all Town and Parish Councils within Stockton's administrative area.

The Committee also has responsibilities for member code of conduct complaints handling under the local assessment regime.

2.2 Membership and Structure

The Standards Committee comprises five Members of the Council, three independent Members and two Parish Council representatives. The Committee continues to be chaired by one of the independent Members, Francis Hayes. The Vice-Chair, Michael Armstrong, is also an independent Member. The membership, including the substitute Members, who served on the Committee during the year, is detailed at the Appendix to the report.



2.3 Annual Return

Each year local authorities are required to complete and submit an Annual Return to Standards for England, designed to provide information about how the local standards framework is functioning. The Committee is involved in the preparation of Stockton's Return. The 2009 and 2010 Annual Return are available at

<http://sbcinternet/yourcouncil/standprob/standcomm/>

3. Conduct of Members - Local Investigation of Misconduct Allegations

3.1 During the year, the Committee received a total of 4 complaints about Members' conduct under the new local assessment regime. There has been 1 referral for investigation; one referral for other action (by the Monitoring Officer) and 2 decisions for no further action. There are no complaints outstanding.

3.2 The relevant reports and minutes can be accessed at <http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=STD>.

The agendas for the Committee's meetings of 7 May; 22 October 2009; 15 January and 12 March 2010 are relevant.

3.3 The report to 12 March 2010 meeting provided a summary of each of the complaints received during the year and information about the length of time taken to deal with them.

4. Standards for England/Adjudication Panel for England

4.1 The Committee has during the year considered reports regarding guidance from Standards for England on the code of conduct and the new local assessment regime together with selected cases heard by the Adjudication Panel.

4.2 The relevant reports can be seen at <http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=STD>

Please refer to the minutes of the Committee's meetings of 7 May; 5 June; 2 July; 30 July; 11 September and 18 December 2009.





5. Training and Development

5.1 Training and development was provided regularly throughout the year on the Code of Conduct and the new local assessment framework. This included an Independent Members Forum organised jointly by the 5 Tees Valley Local Authorities and held on 19 October 2009. Committee Members also attended the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees on 12 and 13 October 2009.

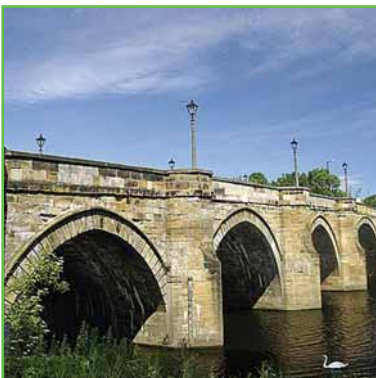
5.2 The local assessment framework (and the proposed new code of conduct for members) was a major priority for training and development for Stockton's Members and Officers; Town and Parish Councils and for the Standards Committee itself. An event for Tees Valley Town and Parish Councils took place on 8 May 2009. Other events for the Tees Valley Standards Committees and for independent members are also planned. Nine local assessment training sessions were provided for Members during the year.

5.3 Reports on Local Assessment are accessible at :-
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=STD>

Reports and case studies for discussion have been submitted to each of the Committee's 12 meetings during 2009/10. The Assessment Made Clear DVD was presented and discussed at the meeting on 20 November 2009.

5.4 A forum for Town/Parish Clerks hosted by the Monitoring Officer was held on two occasions during the year (27 October and 3 November 2009).

5.5 A key issue identified by Members concerned uncertainty regarding predetermination, bias and the Code of Conduct. Training was therefore delivered to Planning Members after a Committee meeting. The Standards Committee also received reports on the issues at its meetings on 20 November; 18 December 2009; 15 January and 12 March 2010. The reports were brought to the attention of all Members.



6. Interests and Gifts and Hospitality

6.1 Regular reminders have been provided to Members and Officers about the need to review and update their interests details and to record details of gifts and hospitality.

6.2 Members' register of interests details, including gifts and hospitality information are accessible on the Council's website at
<http://sbcinternet/yourcouncil/standprob/membsintsgifts/>

- 6.3 Town/Parish Councils have also been asked to continue to provide updated details of their Councillors' interests. These details are retained in the Monitoring Officer's office.
- 6.4 Monitoring reports have been submitted regularly throughout the year to the Standards Committee. These can be seen at:-
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=STD>
and as part of the minutes of the Committee meetings of 9 April; 1 July; 22 October 2009; and 15 January 2010.

7. Local Government Ombudsman

- 7.1 The Committee received details of the Ombudsman's Annual Letter and Annual Report for 2008/09.
- 7.2 The Committee also received details regarding complaints received and determined during the year and various other matters concerning the Ombudsman's service (eg the extension of the Ombudsman's powers in order to deal with complaints about adult care in the private sector and about schools).

Please see, for example, the Committee minutes for 7 May; 11 September; 22 October 2009; 15 January and 12 February 2010 meetings).

8. Audit

- 8.1 In accordance with its joint working arrangements with the Audit Committee regarding issues of common interest, and also its wider governance role, the Standards Committee has received quarterly Internal Audit reports presented by the Chief Internal Auditor. The Committee also received a report regarding a review of the Internal Audit Service at its meeting on 11 May 2009

<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=STD>

- 8.2 Details of the relevant reports can be accessed at
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=STD>

The minutes of the Committee meetings of 7 May; 30 July; 20 November 2009 and 12 February 2010 refer.





9. Constitutional Framework

- 9.1 During the year, the Committee again considered various different aspects of the Council's Constitutional framework and arrangements. In particular the Committee considered scrutiny developments and the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2008/09.

The current version of the Constitution can be accessed on the internet via the link -

<http://sbcinternet/yourcouncil/constitution/> or at the "Your Council" section of the internet and is also accessible on the intranet.

10. Standards and Conduct

- 10.1 The Committee received reports regarding the proposed new code of conduct for members, including case scenarios for discussion. Relevant details can be accessed at:-

<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=STD>

and in the agendas of the Committee's meetings on 20 November and 18 December 2009.

- 10.2 Members of the Committee continued to visit Town/Parish Councils and to feed back details of their views to the Committee and to the relevant Clerks. Committee Members also attended various Council meetings, and meetings of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Area Partnership Boards. Their comments were brought to the attention of relevant Officers and Chairs.

- 10.3 The link to the relevant reports is as follows:-

<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=STD>

The minutes of the Committee's meetings of 5 June; 1 July; 11 September; 22 October; 20 November; 18 December 2009; 15 January; 12 February and 12 March 2010 refer.

11. Committee on Standards in Public Life

- 11.1 The Standards Committee has continued to be kept informed of the work of the Committee on Standards in Public Life during the year. Relevant details (such as those relating to the report on MPs' Expenses and Allowances) can be seen at:- www.public-standards.gov.uk and in the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting of 15 January 2010.

12. Confidential Reporting Policy

12.1 The policy is accessible on the intranet; in the Handbook of Personnel Policies and Procedures; the Members' Handbook; and is included in the Constitution and in the Standards and Probity section of the Council's website

<http://sbcinternet/yourcouncil/standprob/confreppol/>

13. Complaints, Compliments, Commendations and Comments

13.1 As in previous years, quarterly reports have been submitted to the Committee throughout the year.

13.2 Details are accessible at

<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=STD>

Please see the minutes of the meetings of 30 July and 18 December 2009.

14. Dispensations

14.1 During 2008/09, no dispensations were requested under the provisions of the Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) (Dispensations) Regulations 2002.

15. Politically Restricted Posts

15.1 The Committee was not called upon to consider any matters relating to its new responsibilities regarding politically restricted posts.

16. Standards Committee Work Programme 2010/11

16.1 The Committee has agreed its initial work programme for 2010/11.

16.2 The items identified to date as key for 2010/11 can be seen in the minutes of the Committee meeting of 12 March 2010.

16.3 The Local Assessment Framework and the new Code of Conduct for Members will continue to be a key feature of the Committee's work.

16.4 The forward plan details are reviewed on an ongoing basis at each Standards Committee meeting, in association with the Council's forward planning process and statutory forward plan, and the Audit Committee's Work Programme, and are therefore subject to continuing change.



17. Conclusion

17.1 The Committee has continued to fulfil its duties and responsibilities during the year, whilst at the same time receiving appropriate guidance and training itself, as well as playing an important role in relation to the Authority's corporate and ethical governance.



APPENDIX

Standards Committee Membership 2009/10

Francis W Hayes -	Independent Member - Chair
Michael Armstrong -	Independent Member - Vice-Chair
Colin V Algie -	Parish Representative
Paul Baker -	Councillor
Tom Bowman -	Parish Representative
Edna Chapman -	Independent Member
David Coleman -	Councillor
Ian Dalgarno -	Councillor
Ken Dixon -	Councillor
John Fletcher -	Councillor (Substitute)
Terry Laing -	Councillor (Substitute) ²
Colin Leckonby -	Councillor (Substitute)
Roger Mosley -	Parish Representative (Substitute)
Chris Nestor -	Independent Member (Substitute)
Andrew B L Sherris -	Councillor



If you would like this information in any other language or format for example **large print** or audio please contact 'Margaret Fawkes' on 01642 527601.

إذا كنت ترغب الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغات أو بأشكال أخرى على سبيل المثال بالطبعة الكبيرة أو بالشريط المسجل فالرجاء الإتصال
[Margaret Fawkes] على هاتف رقم 01642 527601

ARABIC

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01642 527601 接洽 (Margaret Fawkes)

MANDARIN

اگر شما این اطلاعات را به زبان یا شکل دیگری مثلا چاپ بزرگ یا بصورت صدا میخواهید لطفا با تیم دایورسیتی [Margaret Fawkes] با شماره 01642 527601 به تماس شوید

FARSI

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FRENCH

نه گهر جهزت لئ یه نهم زانیاریه به دهستت بکه ویت به زمانه کانی تر یان به شنبه به کی تر یو نمونه چاپی گه وره/یان به تیبی تو مارکراو تکابه په یوه ندی بکه به [Margaret Fawkes] له سهه ژماره ی ته له فون 01642 527601

KURDISH

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਬਣਤਰ ਜਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ, ਵੱਡੀ ਛਪਾਈ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਟੇਪ/ਸੀ ਡੀ 'ਤੇ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 'Margaret Fawkes' ਨੂੰ 01642 527601 ਨੰਬਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

PUNJABI

اگر آپ ان معلومات کو کسی بھی اور زبان یا انداز، مثلاً بڑے پرنٹ/آڈیو ٹیب وغیرہ میں حاصل کرنا چاہیں، تو ڈاؤن لوڈ کریں (Margaret Fawkes) کو اس نمبر پر فون کیجئے 01642 527601

URDU

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BOROUGH COUNCIL