

Standards Committee

A meeting of Standards Committee was held on Thursday, 12th August, 2010.

Present: Mr F W Hayes(Chairman), Mr M Armstrong(Vice-Chair), Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Aidan Cockerill(Vice Cllr Sherris) Mrs E Chapman (Independent Member), Cllr Bill Noble, Mr C.V Algie(Parish Representative), Mr T Bowman(Parish Representative), Mr R Mosley(Substitute Parish Representative), Cllr John Fletcher(Substitute Elected Member)

Officers: Mr D.E Bond, Mr A. Squires, Miss K. Wannop(LDS)

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Andrew Sherris,

S **Declarations of Interest**

41/10

There were no declarations of interest.

S **Confidential Reporting Policy**

42/10

The Committee considered an update regarding the Authority's confidential reporting policy.

The Policy was last reported to the Committee at its meeting on 13 March 2009, when the Committee noted and agreed that the Policy should be updated to reflect the new arrangements for dealing with allegations of Member misconduct. A copy of the current policy which reflected this was provided.

The Policy was accessible electronically in a variety of ways, including via the intranet and the website e.g. through the Internal Audit Service pages and the Standards and Probity Section. A copy of the Policy was included in the Constitution. The Policy and raising concerns confidentially were publicised through posters, leaflets and other materials. Information was provided for new starters to the Council and articles appeared in KYIT. The last article appeared in the 9th July edition under the heading "Something Not Right? – Reporting Reminder". Similar items would appear on a quarterly basis. Confidential reporting arrangements had been introduced to community schools and other establishments.

A corporate anti-fraud management audit was undertaken in January this year. A number of recommendations were made which were being taken forward by a council wide officer working group. No specific issues arose from the Audit regarding the confidential reporting policy itself.

Since the report to the Committee on 13 March 2009, neither the nominated officers nor the Chief Internal Auditor had raised any concerns regarding the policy or the way in which it operated and was applied.

At this stage, it was not therefore considered that any further action was required, but the Committee was asked to consider the report and to indicate if it considered further action was needed.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Complaints, Compliments, Commendations and Comments

Members were provided with details of complaints, compliments, commendations and comments for the period 1 January 2010 to 31 March, 2010.

The Council received 179 complaints for the last quarter of 2009/10. This compared to 234 complaints in the same period for 2008/2009. In total for the year, 782 complaints were received, compared to 852 for 2008/09.

A total of 541 compliments and commendations were received in the three month period to 31 March 2010, representing 426 compliments and 115 commendations. This compared to 359 commendations in the same three month period in the previous year. For the year end 31 March 2010, 1,906 compliments and commendations were received, which compared to 1,526 commendations in 2008/09.

Members were provided with the information below which showed a breakdown of complaints and compliments and commendations by service group:-

Complaints

L&D 0%
Tristar 26.3%
CESC 31.3%
Tees Active 3.4%
DNS 30.2%
PPC 0%
Resources 8.9%

Compliments and Commendations

L&D 2%
Tristar 11.8%
CESC 12.8%
Tees Active 1.8%
DNS 62.3%
PPC 3.1%
Resources 5.9%

Comments – Quarter 4 and Year End

A total of 147 comments from customers were received in the three month period to 31 March 2010. As this was the first year of reporting, there are no comparable figures for the same quarter in the previous year. For the year ended 31 March 2010, 488 comments were received. The breakdown for each service was:-

L&D 0%
Tristar 7.5%
CESC 21.8%
Tees Active 0%
DNS 68.7%

PPC 0%
Resources 2.0%

The report highlighted some of the main messages from the analysis.

The main trend from the three month period identified that 87% of complaints were in relation to the 3 service areas, Children, Education and Social Care (CESC), Development and Neighbourhood Services (DNS) and Tristar (Housing), with CESC receiving approximately 31% of total complaints, with DNS and Tristar receiving approximately 30% and 26% respectively of total complaints.

Of the total compliments and commendations 75% were received for 2 service areas CESC and DNS, with 62% of these being compliments and commendations for DNS.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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44/10 **Local Government Ombudsmen Complaints 2010/11 - First Quarter**

Members considered a report that provided details of complaints received from and determined by the Ombudsman during the first quarter of the year 2010/11.

In the period 1 April to 30 June 2010, 5 complaints were received from the Local Government Ombudsman. In the same period, 3 complaints were determined and closed by the Ombudsman. The Committee were informed that this year there had been a more admission appeals so more complaints were anticipated.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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45/10 **Monitoring Officer Work Programme - 2010/11**

The Committee considered a report which provided details in delivering the Monitoring Officer work programme for 2010/11.

Members were provided with a copy of the programme taken from the Monitoring Officer Annual Report for 2009/10, which was approved by Council on 14 July 2010. Members were also given details of the progress during the first quarter of 2010/11 in delivering this work programme. The schedule set out six improvement areas, key actions for each, the target dates for completion, progress details and any comments.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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46/10 **Messages from the Standards Committee**

Members considered a report that provided details of messages from the Committee which had been publicised since the most recent meeting. At the Standards Committee meeting on 12 February 2010 it was agreed that a programme of messages from the Committee should be implemented in accordance with the arrangements outlined in the report. The Committee was provided with a copy of the two messages which had been publicised. These

related to independent Members and the Council's handling of complaints. The messages had been published on the council's website; circulated to council receptions, libraries, community centres, Tees Active, Tristar and to Town/Parish Councils. Further messages would be publicised over the coming months and details would be reported to the next available Committee meeting.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

S **Local Assessment Case Studies**

47/10

Members considered a case study and discussed what decisions they would make.

S **Information/Discussion Items**

48/10

Members of the Committee considered the following items :-

1. Town and Parish Council Support Compact

2. Tees Valley Standards Committees Development Programme 2010/11 - Members were advised that this was being put on hold until there was further information on the future of the Standards regime.

3. Coalition Government – Further Developments - The Committee was advised that the plans to abolish the Standards Board regime certainly involved the abolition of Standards for England, but that it was still unclear what else might remain.

4. Committee on Standards in Public Life:-

(i) Report on Local Leadership and Public Trust

(ii) Annual Review and Report 2009/10

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

S **Standards Committee Forward Plan 2010/11**

49/10

Consideration was given to the updated version of the Standards Committee Forward Plan. Members were again asked to consider whether there were other matters which should be included in the programme for future meetings. Members also received the Councils Statutory Forward Plan. Based on the programme as reported and discussed, Members agreed to cancel the Committee meetings scheduled for 9th September and 4th November.