

REPORT TO: Standards Committee

DATE: 4 September 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer

PORTFOLIO: Leader

SUBJECT: Standards Committee Annual Report

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To summarise the work of the Committee in the last municipal year and to recommend Members to invite Council to note the Report

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Report be noted and referred to Council for information.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Major changes were made to the Standards Committee for the municipal year following on from the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Localism Act 2011 with effect from July 2012. Therefore, during the municipal year the Standards Committee was made up of nine elected Members, Councillors Peter Lloyd Jones (Chairman) Marjorie Bradshaw, Arthur Cole, John Gerrard, Joan Lowe, Tony McDermott, Stan Parker, Kevan Wainwright, and Bill Woolfall. In addition, there were two co-opted Independent Members, Mr Tony Luxton and Mrs Anita Morris. The positions for two co-opted Parish Council Members remained vacant throughout the year. The Council appointed three independent persons under the provisions of the Localism Act, Professor David Norman, Mrs Diane Howard, and Mr Roy Radley. All were invited to each meeting. The Committee met on three occasions during the year.

3.2 The role of the Standards Committee is to:-

- Help Councillor and Co-opted Members to observe the Members Code of Conduct.
- Promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, co-opted Members, and Church and Parent Governor Representatives.
- Advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members Code of Conduct.
- Monitor the operation of the Members Code of Conduct.
- Provide training to Councillors and Co-opted Members on matters relating to the Members Code of Conduct.

- Deal with complaints against Councillors and Parish Councillors.
- Deal with matters concerning politically restricted posts.
- Deal with dispensations relating to Declarations of Interest.

- 3.3 The July meeting received the Annual Report of the Committee, and also the yearly report on Declaration of Interests by Members. It demonstrated again that Members were aware of the requirement to declare and register interests and complete declarations in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality. The Monitoring Officer reported that the latter was being used appropriately. The meeting also received a detailed report on current issues, which required consideration to be given to the new format required for dealing with complaints. This was approved and referred to the Council which subsequently endorsed it. The Meeting was also required to look at a revised Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted members, which incorporated the new Statutory Classes of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Disclosable Interests. After detailed consideration the Code was endorsed and referred to full Council which approved it in July 2012. Training was thereafter made available to all Members of the Council on the effects of the new code and the registration and declaration requirements.
- 3.4 The Department of Communities and Local Government subsequently issued guidance on personal interests, in a document entitled 'Openness and Transparency on Personal Interests'. This was considered by Committee at its meeting in November, along with a report produced by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
- 3.5 In February, Members received a paper on the role of Parish Council Clerks for information and a further report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life. It also considered the position with regard to dispensations for Members in taking decisions on Council Tax setting.
- 3.6 Reports were provided throughout the year on cases in other areas of the country which it was considered would be of some interest.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None

6.3 A Healthy Halton

None

6.4 A Safer Halton

None

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 No risks have been identified which require control measures.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 There are no background papers within the meaning of the Act.