

REPORT TO: Standards Committee

DATE: 25th May 2011

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Policy and Resources

SUBJECT: Standards Committee Annual Report

WARDS: N/A

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

- 2.1 That the Report be noted and referred to Council for information.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 During the municipal year the Standards Committee was made up of eleven members, comprising of four independent members, two Parish Councillors, and five members of Halton Borough Council. The Membership during the year was Mr. Bill Badrock (Chairman), Mr. Tony Luxton (Vice Chairman), Mr. Robert Garner, Mrs. Anita Morris Parish Councillor, Bernie Allen Parish Councillor, Canon David Felix, Councillor Peter Murray, Councillor Stan Parker, Councillor Linda Redhead, Councillor John Swain and Councillor Kevan Wainwright.

The Committee met on four occasions throughout the municipal 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 on 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 At the first meeting of the municipal year, the Committee received a report from, the Strategic Director, Resources which outlined the local application of the systems for Declaration of Interests by Members in order to maintain the values of good governance and acceptable behaviour. The Committee was informed that integrity in local government was essential to command the confidence of the community and of all organisations with which the Council came in into contact. It was further noted that it was relevant also in relation to finance, competing for limited national and regional resources, and recruitment. Personal and Personal and Prejudicial interests were defined, and the Report set out Halton's Best Practice. It was pointed out that the Register of Members Interests was held by the Principal Committee Services Officer and a Register of Gifts and Hospitality was also maintained by her where members were required to register any gifts and hospitality worth £25 or over received in connection with official duties as a Member, together with the identity of the giver of the gift or hospitality. It was proposed that a similar Report be brought to the Committee on a yearly basis.

The Committee received and considered guidance from Standards for England on the Benefits and disadvantage of social networking communication and blogging and on the role of Members of more than one authority in relation to the Code.

The Members received regular updates of information coming out from Standards for England, together with digests of cases which had been heard in other authorities.

- A revised version of the Members Code of Conduct had been expected to be released during the year, but this changed after the General Election when the new Government indicated its intention to do away with a Statutory Code of Conduct and the need for local Standards Committees. These matters are contained in the Localism Bill, and Members of the Committee received regular updates.

No complaints were received during the year which required the consideration of the Assessment Sub-Committee.

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 Borough Council
None

6.4 A Safer Halton
None

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal
None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 No key issues have been identified which require control measures

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The Report of itself does not contain specific Equality and Diversity issues

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None