

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

2 DECEMBER 2009

CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE ON MEETING WITH GROUP LEADERS.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

- 1.1 To update Members of the Standards Committee on the recent dialogue that that has taken place with Exeter City Council's Group Leaders.

2.0 MEETING WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL:

- 2.1 The Independent Members met Mr Philip Bostock, Chief Executive and Mr Andrew Fullam, Leader of the Council, on 18th August in order to exchange views on the work of the Standards Committee. There was satisfaction expressed by all present with the workings of the Committee. Training for Councillors was discussed with the objective of ensuring they were kept up-to-date with what is still an evolving situation but avoiding over-burdening them.
- 2.2 The Leader welcomed the Standards Committee Chairman's report to full Council. He hoped this would be an annual event.
- 2.3 The Standards Committee's Chairman indicated that the Independent Members were grateful for the support they received generally and specifically from the Council's Officers. He noted with pleasure the kind words of the Lord Mayor.

3. MEETING WITH THE GROUP LEADERS:

- 3.1 The Chairman subsequently met the leaders of the political groups on 18th November. He outlined the purpose of the Standards Committee in the context of national guidelines. He reminded them that Standards for England were still evolving the system with the result there were still changes taking place. It was important for Councillors to be made aware of those matters that might affect them. While the Chairman of the Standards Committee was of the view that care should be taken not to add to Councillors workload, there was a need to ensure awareness about any newer provisions made in the legislation. The induction of new Councillors was identified as one important time to do this.
- 3.2 The Chairman's Report to Council was again raised with the hope this would take place annually. There was a valuable suggestion that the Annual Report of the Standards Committee might be more widely publicised perhaps by the Independent Chairman being invited to speak to the press.
- 3.3 The Chairman was pleased to say that the number of complaints in Exeter is small compared with adjacent authorities. Although there is some flexibility in the procedures, once a complaint has been made formally then there is a clear sequence the Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee have to take. The Chairman hoped complaints remained at a low level as it was his view generally that prevention was a better strategy.

3.4 It is the Chairman's view that these two meetings were useful in ensuring everyone locally was aware of the Standards Committee. In addition they fulfilled Standards for England's Guidance for good governance by ensuring there was a way for a two way exchange of views.

4.0 **RECOMMENDED that:**

4.1 Members note the content of this report.

Brian J Kirby
Independent Chairman for the Standards Committee

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report: None