

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Wednesday 23 February 2011

### **Present:-**

Mr A Mimmack (Independent Chair)  
Councillors Mrs S Brock, Mrs Danks, Thompson and Winterbottom

(Independent Members)  
Professor B Kirby, L Smith

### **Also Present**

Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer, Member Services Manager and Member Services Officer (SLS)

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### **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held on 30 June 2010 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

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### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

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### **THE FUTURE OF STANDARDS UNDER THE LOCALISM BILL**

The report of the Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer updated Members on the content of the Localism Bill in relation to the Standards Regime.

The Government published the Localism Bill on the 13 December 2010, and included proposals to abolish the Standards Regime in its entirety including:-

- the revocation of the Code of Conduct;
- the removal of the requirement on local authorities to have a Standards Committee;
- the abolition of Standards for England without transferring its functions to any other body; and
- the Removal of the First Tier Tribunal's power to hear complaints.

Although the Standards regime was likely to continue for at least a further 12 months, Members were invited to consider the City Council's future approach after the current arrangements comes to an end. It was noted that the Devon Solicitors Group were considering proposals for a Devon-wide Code of Conduct, which would offer clarity to both Members as well as to the public. The Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer highlighted the continuing duty to promote high standards of conduct and responded to comments about the future role of the Independent Members. Members paid tribute to their valuable contribution and arms length approach, and asked whether there was any possibility of retaining their services in any future regime. The Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer undertook to explore this further together with the possibilities of agreeing a shared Code of Conduct with the Devon Solicitors Group.

**RESOLVED** that Members noted the report and that a further report by the Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer would consider the future options for a voluntary Code of Conduct.

(Report circulated)

### UPDATE ON LOCAL CASES

The Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer circulated details of recent case law involving Members from North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council and Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council primarily as a learning exercise. The details of both cases were discussed.

**RESOLVED** that the case summaries be noted.

### REPORT OF THE COUNCILLOR DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The Member Services Manager presented a report which considered the recent work undertaken by the Councillor Development Steering Group. This included details of a review of the Learning and Development Strategy and the completion of the portfolio for the South West Charter for Elected Member Development. The Assessment visit was due to take place on 23 March.

The Steering Group had progressed a number of initiatives over the last year, including the Learning and Development programme of events, an assessment of Councillors Learning and Development needs and a review of the Learning and Development Strategy to ensure that it was still fit for purpose. The importance of training Members of Committees with regulatory functions, such as Planning and Licensing, to ensure effective and lawful decision making was endorsed.

The Councillor Induction process for 2011 was also considered with new initiatives including a presentation on 'Things I wish I had known when I was first elected'. It was noted that a Councillor had been trained for the pool of mentors as part of the Devon/ Wiltshire Mentoring Scheme and an invitation had been extended to Exeter's councillors to join the scheme as mentees.

**RESOLVED** that the Standards Committee note the work undertaken by the Councillor Development Steering Group and progress on the implementation of the Councillors' Learning and Development Strategy.

(Report circulated)

(The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm and closed at 5.10 pm)

Chair