



# STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Annual Review

February 2010 – January 2011

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **THE COMMITTEE**

Mark Bailey	Councillor
Mrs Anne Foot	Independent Member
John Goulandris	Councillor
Mr Trevor Green	Independent Member
Christopher Jackson	Councillor
Mr Bob Maggs	Chair- Independent Member
Mrs Sheila Ottewell	Vice Chair- Independent Member
Mrs Rachel Sellers	Independent Member

The committee has had an interesting year, with the announcement from central government that Standards for England is going to be abolished. The standards committee have not conducted any investigations, however they have been involved with 4 Initial Assessment Sub-Committees, 2 of which were reviewed. Throughout this process, the Standards Committee have ensured that the system of assessment and investigation is as fair and transparent as possible.

Added to this is the other work of the Committee which ensures that the Council has procedures and protocols that enable it and it's councillors to operate within the legal framework within which the Code of Conduct for Members operates.

### **WHAT IS THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE FOR?**

- (a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by the members and co-opted members of Bristol City Council;
- (b) assisting those members and co-opted members to observe the members' code of conduct and any other codes and protocols agreed by the Council;
- (c) advising the council on the adoption or revision of its members' code of conduct and any associated codes and protocols;
- (d) monitoring and reviewing the operation of the Council's code of conduct;

(e) advising, training or arranging to train members and coopted members of the council on matters relating to the members' code of conduct.

(f) considering and determining any allegations against councillors of the council of misconduct, meaning a breach of the members' code of conduct or other codes/protocols approved by the Council or by the Standards Committee on its behalf.

AND

To exercise other functions of the council as the council from time to time considers appropriate including:

(a) liaison with and the making of representations to any of the following persons or bodies in respect of any matter falling within or ancillary to the Standards Committee's terms of reference:

(i) government ministers/departments;

(ii) bodies which represent local authorities or which undertake a co-ordinating role in respect of specific local authority functions, in particular the Local Government Association (LGA);

(iii) the Audit Commission;

(iv) the Local Government Ombudsman;

(v) Standards for England.

(b) Making recommendations arising out of the discharge of the committee's functions in respect of the Council's disciplinary or grievance procedures;

(c) Considering nominations made by the whips for the conferring of the title of "*honorary alderman*" and making recommendations to full council thereon;

(d) Granting dispensations to members and co-opted members from the requirements relating to interests set out in the members' code of conduct;

(e) Oversee reviews of the Council's constitution;

(f) Monitor the register of members' interests;

- (g) Recommend to full Council appointments of independent members of the Standards Committee;
- (h) To determine applications for dispensations in respect of politically restricted posts;
- (i) Undertake such functions as the Secretary of State may by regulations confer on the Standards Committee.

#### **WHAT STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND DOES:**

- Oversees and promote the Code of Conduct
- Provide national guidance to Members and local Standards Committees
- Monitor and review the operation of locally based complaints processes

#### **WHAT THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE DOES:**

- To continue to deal with any complaints in a fair, transparent and just way
- To provide support and training to all Councillors on the interpretation of the Code of Conduct
- To maintain a strong ethical local government culture
- To respond to central government consultations
- To provide local Codes and Protocols setting out what the Council expects in terms of implementing national guidance and legislation

#### **IN 2010**

- Following a consultation process with members that included two seminar and discussion sessions, we adopted the proposed procedure for local assessment of complaints.
- We granted special dispensations to enable the councillors named in the report to take part in the consideration and discussion of, and to vote on any question concerning the council's budget in 2010/2011.
- It was agreed that the Guidance for Members and Officers document that had been produced to provide guidance on the purdah period, be endorsed.
- We considered and agreed that the voluntary Code of Conduct for Members Attendance be agreed. The whips would expect members of their party to sign the voluntary code

and it would be recorded on the councillor's page on the website whether they had done so.

- The committee rejected a proposal from the Alderman Association that Alderman should be asked to adhere to the Code of Conduct. Later, a representative of the Alderman Association attended a committee meeting to discuss the matter.
- The title of Honourary Alderman was conferred upon Mary Sykes, David Kitson, Royston Griffey, John Bees, Martin Kerry and Spud Murphy.
- The committee decided that the draft questionnaire for councillors to comment on how to improve the standards committee would be re-visited in February 2011.
- Trevor Green's term of office as an independent member of the committee came to an end, however the committee agreed that due to the uncertainty surrounding the future of the standards committee, and the cost of advertising and putting in place a new committee member, they were content for Trevor Green to remain in post. It was agreed that Standards for England would be contacted for a dispensation until the future of Standards for England was clear.
- In April 2010 we had a joint meeting with the Audit Committee. The following three points are of note.
  - It was decided that the two committees would consider each other's annual reports to give opportunity for comment and to avoid duplication.
  - There was discussion about the way council meetings are conducted, and it was suggested that the Standards Committee host a discussion to make constructive recommendations about improving the way that council meetings worked.
  - Following publication in the local press of all councillors' expenses, there was agreement that the Independent Remuneration Panel would review the process for councillor's getting an internet connection at their home. Some councillors had claimed expenses for their broadband, and others had opted for an internal 'centrex' phone provided by the council. The local press report did not show those Councillor's that opted for the in-house system, which provided an unbalanced picture.

- The committee considered the report from Standards for England on the use of 'blogging' and asked officers to ensure that the report was included in the protocol prepared by the director of Communications and Marketing on the use of social media in the run up to 2012 elections.

**In 2011 we will await further guidance from the Standards for England on the future of standards committees. In the meantime:**

- We will provide guidance and protocols as necessary, particularly arising from issues highlighted in any complaint alleging breach of the Code of Conduct for Members.
- We will meet annually with the Audit Committee to ensure that our shared aim of promoting good governance is done jointly and without duplication.
- We will comment on consultations undertaken by central government.
- We will deal with any complaints as they are submitted.

*For further information please contact:-*

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## WORK PROGRAMME : STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2011-2012

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Officer</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Meeting 1: 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011</b>	Annual Business	SAM	
	Work Programme 2011-2012	SD & SAM	
	Appointment of Aldermen Nominations	Sam Mahony	
	Politically Restricted Posts	Mark Williams	
	THE LOCALISM BILL	Shahzia Daya	
	Member/Officer relations (alternate meetings)		
	Discussion ref Full Council Improvements		
<b>Meeting 2: 8<sup>th</sup> September 2011</b>	six monthly review of Local Assessment Framework (Agreed Feb 2010)		
	Work Programme, Annual Report and Terms of Reference for Audit Committee to be shared to ensure no duplication.		
<b>Meeting 3: 17<sup>th</sup> November 2011</b>	Selection Procedure for Lord Mayor		Info Only
	Member/Officer relations (alternate meetings)		Info Only

<b>Meeting 4: 9<sup>th</sup> February 2012</b>	Report to grant dispensations to vote at the budget Council meeting		
	Annual Report of the Standards Committee		
	Follow up report on Lord Mayor Selection		
	Protocol for actions during Purdah (confirmation of guidance)		
	Six monthly Local Assessment Framework – (Agreed Feb 2010)		
<b>12<sup>th</sup> April 2012</b>	<b>Joint Meeting with Audit Committee</b>		
	Annual Governance Statement	Dick Powell	
<b>Meeting 5: 14<sup>th</sup> April 2011</b>	Member/ Officer protocol		Info only

ITEMS TO ADD WHERE CONVENIENT

**The Role of the Monitoring Officer**

**Code of Practice on LG Publicity**

**Planning Protocol/Licensing Protocol- review during year**

**Changes to the Code of Conduct (new Councillors and training)**