



**WYCOMBE**  
**DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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Queen Victoria Road  
High Wycombe  
Bucks HP11 1BB

## Standards Committee

Date: 7 June 2011  
Time: 6.15 pm  
Venue: Council Chamber  
District Council Offices, Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe Bucks

### Membership

Chairman Mrs E Springford  
Vice Chairman Mr D Sainsbury

Councillors: D J Carroll, Mrs G A Jones, J A Savage and Ms J D Wassell

Independent Members: Rev G Hargrove and Mr B Morgan-Timms

Parish Council Members: D Banfield, J Sherlock and Mrs V Smith

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## Agenda

Item		Page
1	<b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b> To confirm the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on Tuesday 11 January 2011 (previously circulated).	
2	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> To receive apologies for absence.	
3	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> To receive any declaration of personal or personal and prejudicial interest by Members relating to items on the agenda. If any Member is uncertain as to whether an interest should be disclosed, he or she is asked if possible to contact the District Solicitor prior to the meeting. Members are reminded that if they are declaring an interest, whether personal or personal and prejudicial, then (subject to paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct) they should state the nature of that interest, whether or not they leave the meeting.	
4	<b>RE-APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEES</b>	

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee is advised to *RESOLVE*:

(a) that all Members of the Standards Committee (including those appointed after this meeting to any vacancy) form a “pool” of members for meetings of (a) a Complaints Initial Assessment Sub-Committee, (b) a Complaints Review Sub-Committee, and (c) a Local Standards Hearing panel.

(b) that the Complaints Initial Assessment Sub-Committee, the Complaints Review Sub-Committee and the Local Standards Hearing Panel (to be drawn in each case and on each occasion from the “pool” and with their terms as reference as previously authorised) be appointed until the next Annual Council Meeting or, if earlier, the date upon which Standards Committees formed under existing legislation are abolished, with the same membership as at present, ie one District Council member, one independent Member and one Parish Council representative.

(c) that the Committee’s functions in respect of initial assessment be delegated to the Complaints Initial Assessment Sub-Committee, the Committee’s functions in respect of reviews be delegated to the Complaints Review Sub-Committee, and the Committee’s functions in respect of all other local determination matters (including hearings) be delegated to the Local Standards Hearing Panel.

(d) the selection of members from the “pool” be delegated to the Head of Democratic Legal and Policy Services and

(e) the date, time and venue for meetings of these Sub-Committees be fixed by the Head of Democratic Legal and Policy Services.

## **Corporate Implications**

4.1 Authority to appoint members to Standards Committees is provided by section 53 of the Local Government Act 2000.

4.2 The appointment of Sub-Committees by the Standards Committee is authorised by section 54A of the Local Government Act 2000. The appointment of Sub-Committees to deal with initial assessment and review is a requirement imposed on Standards Committees by Regulation 6 (1) of The Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008, which came into force on 8 May 2008.

## **Detailed Report**

4.3 At its meeting on 6 May 2008, the Standards Committee resolved to form a pool of members comprising all members of the Committee, and appointed the Complaints Initial

Assessment Sub-Committee, the Complaints Review Sub-Committee and the Local Standards Hearing Panel (“the three Sub-Committees”) (with membership to be drawn from the pool in each case) until the Annual Council meeting in 2011.

- 4.4 As the prospective abolition of Standards Committees, the local assessment regime as currently constituted, and Standards for England as set out in the Localism Bill, has yet to be implemented, it is necessary for the three Sub-Committees to be re-appointed until the next Annual Council meeting or, if earlier, the date upon which Standards Committees formed under existing legislation are abolished and it is recommended accordingly.
- 4.5 As required by section 55 (5) of the Local Government Act 2000, Parish Councils for which the Committee is responsible have been consulted on the numbers of members and their terms of office in respect of the three Sub-Committees and comments requested by close of business on 30 May 2011. Any comments received will be fed back to the Committee at the meeting.

### **Background Papers**

None.

## **5 MONITORING OF COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS, THIRD AND FOURTH QUARTERS 2010-11**

1 - 24

Contact Officer: Jean Roberts  
Ext: 3202

### ***RECOMMENDATION***

The Standards Committee is asked to:

Note the attached data and charts for the periods 1 October – 31 December 2010 (Quarter 3), and 1 January – 31 March 2011 (Quarter 4).

### **Corporate Implications**

- 5.1 The establishment and maintenance of complaints procedures is conducive to the discharge of the Council’s various functions and as such are authorised by Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

- 5.2 There are no financial implications.
- 5.3 A robust complaints procedure assists in minimising the risks to the Council arising from complaints.

### **Policy/Community Plan Implications**

- 5.4 This report is relevant to the Council's priority of excellent customer service.

### **Background**

- 5.5 Quarterly information is supplied to all business units which record complaints, comments or compliments on ServiceMail, and after consultation with managers, composite information for each Management Team and the Strategic Management Board. Further complaints statistics are also incorporated as Local Performance Indicators by the Policy and Research Unit.

### **Report**

- 5.6 The information and charts for the quarters are attached herewith and additional information has been added to the graphs to show the targets in place for the relevant time periods, as well as a spreadsheet showing a comparison with the quarters in the previous year for key indicators.
- 5.7 The information and charts for the quarter are attached herewith and additional information has been added to the graphs to show the targets in place for the relevant time periods. In addition a summarised report on LG Ombudsman complaints is also attached. The target in place for complaints responded to in target is 90% for this year, and feedback on customer satisfaction with response, customer satisfaction with outcome, and satisfaction with complaint handling are also now all 90%. The following are the priority areas for improvement and the results for this quarter for all business units within the Council:

#### **1. Answering complaints within our corporate timescale of 10 working days**

Quarter 3: This quarter there was a total percentage of complaints within target of 88.5%, slightly below target. This is another drop from the previous quarter. There have been some problems arising from staff changes in two sections which hopefully will improve in the near future.

Quarter 4: This quarter there was a total percentage

- of complaints within target of 93.5%, above target and a significant improvement from the last two quarters.
- 2. Review of Complaints by business units to “Learn Lessons” and Improvements Made**
- Quarter 3: For this quarter 69 complaints were received with only 15 complaints/comments reviewed by business units, and 5 improvements logged (all improvements logged were by on-street and off-street parking teams).
- Quarter 4: For this quarter 64 complaints were received with only 13 complaints/comments reviewed by business units, and 3 improvements logged. It is disappointing not to have more improvements as a result of complaints.
- 3. Customer Feedback Cards - Complaints**
- The numbers of customer feedback responses will always be lower than the number of complaints received as these are sent out after our response.
- Quarter 3: This quarter has seen feedback logged for 24 out of the 69 items received. Feedback for this quarter with regard to outcome and complaint handling has improved slightly since the last quarter at 79% and 83% and the remaining feedback on the speed of response and comprehension also improved at 92%.
- Quarter 4: During this quarter there has been feedback logged for 35 out of the 64 items received. Feedback for this quarter with regard to outcome and complaint handling has improved significantly since the last quarter at 89% and 94% and the remaining feedback on the speed of response and comprehension also improved at 100% and 94%.
- 4. Complaints to the LG Ombudsman**
- Quarter 3: There have been 5 complaints received from the Ombudsman since the last quarter, and 6 decisions as shown on the attached information sheets. There have been no findings of maladministration.
- Quarter 4: There have been no findings of maladministration. Four decisions have been received this quarter. There are 3 current ongoing Ombudsman investigations.
- 5. Compliments Logging**
- Quarter 3: The total for compliments logged is 87 for this quarter. The single service area with the most compliments for this quarter is the CSC with 14, with Environmental Services a close second (for the third time!) with 13.

Quarter 4: The total for compliments logged is 88 for this quarter. The single service area with the most compliments for this quarter is the CSC again with 17, with Environmental Services and Development Control coming second with 12 each.

### **Comments from Management Teams**

#### *Comments from Team 1:*

##### Quarter 3:

- 5.8 The 2 complaints dealt with by the CSC which were out of target would be reviewed with the Director. In relation to feedback on complaints, further information was also requested on the Servicemail item where the complainant had been dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint by the CSC. It was noted that complaints were now being addressed at CSC monthly meetings. DMT was asked to remind Service managers to consider possible service improvements as a result of complaints.

##### Quarter 4:

- 5.9 Complaints to be reviewed at the next management team meeting to discuss learning points from complaints.

#### *Comments from Team 2:*

##### Quarter 3:

- 5.10 A reminder has gone to those business units not achieving responses within target times. The feedback on the Council's response to complaints highlights a high degree of satisfaction with the handling of complaints.

### **Conclusion/Future Work**

- 5.11 There is still further work to be done to make sure that complaints are reviewed by managers and teams to see if an improvement to services can be done as a result of the complaint, but teams are to be congratulated on a good improvement to the number of complaints responded to within target during Quarter 4.
- 5.12 The Complaints Officer is currently looking at ways to improve our complaints webpage and whether we can have a web-form for submission of complaints (also

covering ethnicity/minority monitoring). This may depend on available funding.

### **Background Papers**

5.13 "Have We Got It Right" leaflet for the public.

## **6 TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS 2011/12**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee is advised to *RESOLVE* that the training arrangements for the municipal year 2011/12 be as set out in paragraph 6.6 of the report.

### **Corporate Implications**

6.1 One of the Committee's terms of reference is to deal with the arrangement of training on certain standards of conduct issues. Such training arrangements are authorised by Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 and section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

6.2 There are no financial implications to this report.

### **Council Priorities/Sustainable Community Strategy Implications**

6.3 Standards issues are relevant to the Council priority of Excellent Customer Service.

### **Report**

6.4 As the Standards Board regime, including the Code of Conduct and Standards Committees as currently constituted, together with the local assessment regime are prospectively abolished in the Localism Bill, there would seem to be little merit in organising large scale training, with associated costs, given that the Bill is expected to become law by the end of the current calendar year.

6.5 However, the Committee does have two new Members, who will need to be familiar with the current system until it is abolished, especially for the purpose of sitting on the Initial Assessment, Review and Hearing Sub-Committees.

6.6 Accordingly, it is proposed that in addition to two Member induction sessions on the Code of Conduct and the current standards regime, the Monitoring Officer goes through the

Code of Conduct and the local assessment regime with the new Members. They will then be able (with the leave of the Chairman) to sit in as observers during at least one Initial Assessment Sub-Committee meeting before taking a full part in that respect.

**For further information, please contact 01494 421210, [peter\\_druce@wycombe.gov.uk](mailto:peter_druce@wycombe.gov.uk)**