

Minutes

**Standards Committee
Monday, 5 September 2011
Meeting held at Committee Room 3 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW**



**Published on: 6 September
Come into effect on: Immediately**

Members Present: Allan Edwards (Chairman), James Keys (independent member),
Councillors Barrett, Corthorne, Gilham, Harmsworth, Hensley, Lewis and Riley

Officers Present: Messrs Alagh and White

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Vice-Chairman, Mr Ellis, Councillors Khursheed and Markham (for whom Councillor Gilham was substituting).

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2011 were taken as read and confirmed.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. CONFIRMATION THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THOSE MARKED PART II, IN PRIVATE

5. REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's work programme for 2011/12 was noted.

6. FUTURE OF THE STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND REGIME

Members received an update on the work to date of the Code of Conduct Working Group established at the last meeting to consider the potential content of a voluntary Code of Conduct for Members along with a proposed complaints and disciplinary procedure, to be put in place once the Localism Act received Royal Assent and the current Standards for England regime ceased to operate.

To date the Working Group had produced a revised Code of Conduct which included a new 'Whips' Protocol' to formalise the process whereby initial referral of complaints against Members to the appropriate Whips Office would become the normal procedure. In addition the Working Group had revised the standard complaint form, reviewed the complaints procedure and examined the current Planning Code of Conduct for Members and the ICT Code for likely required changes.

It was noted that there were several areas that would need further examination once the final wording contained in the Act were known, especially with regard to the Council's powers to deal with complaints and impose sanctions. Members felt strongly that if the Council were to have an effective complaints procedure then it would need to be supported by a strong sanctions regime. It was noted that currently the Bill did not specify what sanctions might be available to local authorities although any sanction would need to be reasonable and proportionate. The Committee agreed that appropriate representations should be made to try and ensure that the Act contained provision for sanctions to be imposed by a local authority against Members found to be in breach of the Code.

Finally it was noted that the recommendations of the Standards Committee in relation to this item would need formal approval by the full Council as soon as possible after the Act received Royal Assent. It was agreed that the final version of the proposed revised, voluntary Code should be circulated to Members for comments before being submitted to Council.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) the Code of Conduct Working Party be thanked for their work to date and the documents produced so far be approved in principle, subject to any further changes that may be required once the Act receives Royal Assent.**
- b) representations be made through appropriate channels with regard to the inclusion in the Act of appropriate sanctions to be available to local authorities should there be a breach of the voluntary Code of Conduct.**

7. COMPLAINTS MONITORING

This item was considered in Part II without the press or public present as it contained confidential information as defined in the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

The Committee noted details of all complaints made against Members or determined in the last six months.