

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

2016 - 2017

1. THE LOCALISM ACT 2011 - THE STANDARDS REGIME

The new standards regime came into effect on 1 July 2012. The Council, at its meeting on 4 July 2012, agreed the membership of eight Councillors and three Town and Parish Council non-voting co-optees. An Independent Person was also appointed by Council on 4 July 2012. The Independent Person is not a member of the Committee but does attend its meetings and hearings.

The Standards Committee has met twice during the Council Year 2016-2017 on 19 January 2017 and for a hearing on 4 November 2016.

2. BERWICK UPON TWEED TOWN COUNCIL - HOEY AINSCOUGH REVIEW

The Standards Committee was informed about work that had been carried out with Berwick upon Tweed Town Council in an effort to promote and maintain high standards of conduct amongst that authority's members. The report appeared to have been well received by the Town Council and the report recommendations were agreed at its meeting on 9 January 2017. The report called for monitoring by Northumberland County Council after a six month period and then 12 months although this frequency could be changed to quarterly. A Northumberland County Council Officer had been seconded as interim Clerk to the Town Council and the cost was being met by the Town Council.

Members welcomed the report and felt that the recommendations could be used as a useful best practice guide for other Parish and Town Councils. The document was publicly available and any Parish or Town Council would be free to make use of the recommendations contained in the report.

3. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT - HALTWHISTLE TOWN COUNCIL

At a hearing on the 4th November 2016 the Standards Committee found that a member of Haltwhistle Town Council had failed to treat the Clerk to the Town Council with respect and had bullied her contrary to that authority's members' code of conduct. As a consequence of the Standards Committee's findings the member concerned had been censured by the Town Council, removed from all of the authority's committees and sub-committees for a period of one year and had undergone training in relation to the members' code of conduct.

4. CASELOAD

The Monitoring Officer, in conjunction with the Independent Person has dealt with 16 complaints this year, eight of which were related to Parish and Town Councils and the remaining eight concerning members of the County Council.

No action required	-	11
Investigation	-	0
Apology Requested	-	1
Apology Requested but not received	-	0
Ongoing	-	1
Withdrawn	-	1
Mediation recommended	-	1
Other action	-	3

Mr. J. Jackson
Independent Chair