

# **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**2017 - 2018**

## **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's appointment was renewed for three years in 2015, with a further extension being agreed by Council on 6 September 2017 until 2019. The postholder is not a member of the Committee but does attend its meetings and hearings. The Independent Chair of the Standards Committee was appointed by Council on 4 September 2013 for a two year period with an option to extend for a further three years. A three year extension was agreed by Council on 7 October 2015.

The Standards Committee has met twice during the Council Year 2017-2018 on 26 October 2018 and 11 January 2018 with a forthcoming meeting on 26 April 2018.

## **2. APPOINTMENT OF TOWN AND PARISH REPRESENTATIVES**

The previous three Parish representatives on the Standards Committee resigned prior to the Parish Elections in May 2017. In order to fill these vacancies, expressions of interest from existing Parish Councillors were sought and four applications were received. One applicant later withdrew. An Interview Panel comprising the Independent Person and Councillors Mrs C. Homer and S. Dungworth was appointed with delegated authority to make a recommendation to Council on the appointment.

The following were recommended to and appointed by Council on 3 January 2018.

Councillor Bryn Owen, Craster Parish Council  
Councillor Andrew Tebbutt, Morpeth Town Council  
Councillor Alex Wallace, East Bedlington Parish Council

Article 9 of the Council's Constitution required that an area based approach be made to the appointment of Parish representatives, however, due to the difficulty in attracting applications in this instance, it was agreed that this approach should no longer be pursued.

### **3. BERWICK UPON TWEED TOWN COUNCIL - HOEY AINSCOUGH REVIEW**

The January 2017 meeting of the Standards Committee agreed that a six monthly progress report should be presented to it on progress made by Berwick upon Tweed Town Council in response to the recommendations of the Hoey Ainscough Review. A six monthly progress report was received in June 2017 and reported to the October 2017 meeting. It was clear from this report that the Town Council was making good progress with most of the recommendations from the Hoey Ainscough Review. The Clerk to the Town Council was invited to attend the January 2018 meeting of the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee felt that the Clerk's progress report was very positive and that the Standard's Committee's requirements for monitoring had been fulfilled.

### **4. GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY - GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS**

A guidance note was prepared which aimed to clarify the procedures for Members relating to the receipt of gifts and hospitality. The guidance would be adopted as an appendix to the Members' Code of Conduct and, therefore, a breach would constitute a breach of that Code of Conduct.

### **5. PROMOTION AND MAINTENANCE OF HIGH STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

The Standards Committee considered a report asking it what actions it could identify to be undertaken in pursuit of the fulfilment of the statutory duty in relation to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct. In view of the very large number of Parish Councils in Northumberland, Members agreed that the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) should be approached with a view to including information on standards of conduct within its electronic newsletter. NALC would be approached with a view to moving this matter forward.

### **6. CASELOAD**

The Monitoring Officer, in conjunction with the Independent Person has dealt with 14 complaints this year, 4 of which were related to Parish and Town Councils exclusively, 2 of which concerned dual hatted members and 8 of which concerned members of the County Council exclusively

No action required	14
Investigation	0
Apology Requested	0
Apology Requested but not received	0
Ongoing	0
Withdrawn	0
Mediation recommended	0
Other action	0

**Mr. J. Jackson**  
**Independent Chair**

