



Leicester  
City Council

Standards Committee  
Council

7 September 2011  
24 November 2011

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## Standards Committee Annual Report

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### Draft Report of the Independent Chair of the Standards Committee

#### 1. Purpose of report

To inform Council of the work of the Standards Committee for the municipal year 2010-11.

#### 2. Recommendations

2.1 Standards Committee is recommended to consider this draft report and make comments as it sees fit prior to its submission to Council.

2.2 Council is recommended to note the final report.

#### 3. Report

##### 3.1 The Standards Committee

During this period the full Standards Committee met on five occasions.

3.2 The Committee is made up of six elected members and three independent members. There was some variation of membership during the period which again presented some training challenges for the Committee. Officers from Democratic Support provided individual training sessions for members required to sit on sub-committees so that they were clear about their roles.

##### 3.3 Activities of the Committee

3.4 Terms of Reference for the Committee and its Sub-Committees were reviewed and redrafted.

The Committee also considered and revised the “etiquette guide” for Council meetings in advance of the local elections in May, to assist newly-elected councillors.

The Committee produced a guidance leaflet for Members which outlined the process for the local assessment of complaints against councillors. This was circulated to all Members and included in the induction packs for new Members.

The Committee also looked into the implications of the growing popularity of social networking and the potential risks for Members in using these new ways of communicating. This work is ongoing, with a view to the current guidance being updated.

- 3.5 The Committee continued its tradition of inviting guests to our meetings. In November Lord Mayor Councillor Colin Hall attended and led a discussion about the Lord Mayor’s role in maintaining high standards in Council and supporting new members as well as sharing with the Committee his views on the importance of the Lord Mayor’s role in charity fundraising.
- 3.6 Much of the work of the Committee has involved receiving and commenting upon reports relevant to the ethical aspects of the Council’s work. The Corporate Governance Annual Report for 2009-10 was scrutinised during the period and feedback offered. The Committee also commented upon procedures relating to regulatory matters. The Code of Practice for member involvement in Licensing matters was scrutinised as was the Code of Practice for Member involvement Development Control decisions and in pre-application discussions.
- 3.7 Briefings on legislation relevant to the Committee’s work were considered, in particular relating to the implications of the Localism Bill on the future of the standards regime. The Committee began informal discussions on what might replace the current standards arrangements.
- 3.8 Local assessment of complaints
- 3.9 The Standards Assessment Sub-Committee met seven times to deal with a total of 14 complaints against councillors. The Review Sub-Committee considered four requests for the review of Assessment Sub-Committee decisions. One investigation into a complaint was completed and considered by the full Standards Committee. This report was subsequently the subject of a hearing to consider whether there had been a breach of the Code of Conduct. The decision was that there had been no breach.

The number of complaints received this year was unusually high and the majority of them were received between January and April 2011.

No breach of the Code of Conduct was found during the period.

3.10 Looking to the Future.

- 3.11 Currently the Localism Bill is making its way through Parliament. The Bill contains the abolition of Standards for England and legislation relating to standards committees and local assessment of complaints. It is likely that authorities will be given the authority to adopt their own code of conduct or make alternative arrangements as they see fit. They will also be able to decide how to deal with complaints against councillors, although it seems likely that the range of sanctions currently available will be removed. A new criminal offence with regard to failure to declare financial interests will be introduced.

Discussions that will take place in the next few months will be crucial for the Council in setting its ethical agenda and ensuring high standards of conduct in the future. This could include putting in place a more flexible system of dealing with complaints. Recommendations will be submitted in due course to the City Mayor, Cabinet and Council for consideration.

**4. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

**4.1 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.  
Steve Charlesworth, Head of Finance (Financial control)

**4.2 Legal Implications**

There are no additional legal implications.

**4.3 Climate Change Implications**

This report does not contain any significant climate change implications and therefore should not have a detrimental effect on the Council's climate change targets.

Helen Lansdown, Senior Environmental Consultant - Sustainable Procurement

**4.4 Other Implications**

<b>OTHER IMPLICATIONS</b>	<b>YES/ NO</b>	<b>Paragraph/References Within the Report</b>
Equal Opportunities	N	
Policy	N	
Sustainable and Environmental	N	
Crime and Disorder	N	
Human Rights Act	N	
Elderly/People on Low Income	N	
Corporate Parenting	N	
Health Inequalities Impact	N	

**5. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972**

Nil

**6. Report Author**

Sheila Brucciani

Independent Chair of the Standards Committee