



Standards Committee Annual Report 2009/10



Kettering
Borough Council

Annual Report 2009/10



Introduction by Julie Miller Independent Chair of the Standards Committee

This report is prepared on behalf of the Standards Committee.

It details the work that your Standards Committee has completed in the year 2009/10 and work that is already proposed for the coming year. Unwritten in this plan is training, which forms a large part of our meetings and, to the Committee, is seen to be the key to a continuance of exemplary standards within this Borough.

The past year has seen the first meeting of the Review Joint Committee taking place. The joint Committee was established with Wellingborough and Corby to review decisions by Standards Referrals Committees to take no action in respect of a complaint under the Code of Conduct. It transpires that this was the first joint review to take place anywhere in the Country. The benefits of this are that assessment is independent at the appeal stage and there is no requirement to change the size of the Standards Committee. The shared appeal committee also helps to ensure consistency of approach between participating authorities.

As Chair, I have embarked on some “personal training” and have attended several Council meetings including Full Council, Town and Parish Meetings as well as Planning and Licensing committees. These interesting experiences have allowed me to see Council work from both sides and to understand at least some of the challenges that councillors have to balance with the frustrations that members of the public may feel.

As a member of the public with the privileged position of Chair of this Committee, I, together with all members of the Standards Committee, remain fully dedicated to the role of ensuring high standards of conduct are upheld within our community.

MEMBERS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Kettering Borough Council's Standards Committee is committed to the promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members.

In accordance with best practice, the Council has a Standards Committee that is not only chaired by an independent member but also (with the casting vote of the Chair) has a majority of independent members. The role of the independent members as impartial arbiters is crucial to the success of the Council's Standards Committee in maintaining public confidence in local democracy.

The number of independent members is five, including the Chair and Deputy Chair, out of a total of ten members, and rules exist on the length of term of office before the place on the Committee comes up for election.

In 2009/10 Independent members received an annual allowance as follows:-

Chair:	£2,491
Other independent members	£623

The level of allowance may be amended from time to time in accordance with the recommendations of the Council's Independent Review Panel

A serving Independent Member of the Standards Committee may resign from the committee by giving the Monitoring Officer written notice, such notice to expire at the end of any calendar month.

Membership 2009/10

Membership in 2009/10 was as follows:-

Independent Members

Ms Julie Miller (Chair)
Mr Stuart Kilpatrick
Mr Brian Christie
Mr Phil Carter
Mr Lloyd Landry

Town/Parish Representatives

Mr Geoffrey Durward
Ms Heather Shuttleworth (resigned in September 2009)

Borough Councillors

Councillor Margaret Talbot
Councillor Christopher Groome
Councillor Gil Rennie (dec'd)
Councillor Paul Corazzo

The Committee would like to pay tribute to the work of Councillor Gil Rennie, who had been a dedicated member of the Committee from 1999 up until his death in 2009.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE – ROLE AND FUNCTIONS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Standards Committee and its sub committees have the following roles and functions:

- (a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members;
- (b) assisting councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (c) advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (d) monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (e) advising, training or arranging to train councillors and co-opted members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (f) granting dispensations to councillors and co-opted members from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (g) managing the local consideration of allegations of breach of the Council's Code of Conduct;
- (h) the exercise of (a) to (g) above in relation to the parish and town councils in the Borough and the members of those parish and town councils;
- (i) overview of the whistle blowing policy;
- (j) overview of complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations;
- (k) overview of the protocol on Councillor/Staff relations.
- (l) the exercise of (i) to (k) above in relation to those parish and town councils that have requested the Committee to undertake this role.
- (m) overview of other matters directly connected with its other functions as referred by Council or the Executive for comment from time to time.

Proceedings of the Standards Committee

The Standards Committee conducts its proceedings in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules and, where appropriate, in accordance with the Standards Committee Hearings Procedure Rules and the current terms of reference for the sub committees contained in part M of the constitution.

THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Council has adopted the National Code of Conduct, which is due for review.

Part 5 of the Council's Constitution (Codes and Protocols) contains the following Codes:-

- The Member Code of Conduct
- The Register of Members' Interests
- The Staff Code of Conduct
- The Protocol on Councillor/Staff Relations
- The Whistleblowing Policy
- The Protocol on Open Government
- The Monitoring Officer Protocol

All the above Codes and Protocols can be viewed on the Council's website.

COMPLAINTS – 2009/10

No complaints have been received during the period 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010.

TRAINING EVENTS

Members of the Committee attended one training event during the year. The Monitoring Officer delivered training on the local assessment of complaints, which was preceded by the showing of a Standards for England DVD on the subject.

The Monitoring Officer and Geoffrey Durward attended the annual conference of Standards for England in 2009.

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE DURING 2009/10

The following issues were discussed by the Standards Committee during 2009/10.

- Town and Parish Councils Peer Mentoring Programme
- Annual Report for the Period 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009
- The Standards Board Annual Return
- Review of the Internet and E-mail Policy

- Review of the Complaints Form and Publicity for the Complaints Process
- The Standards Board – Other Action Guidance
- Standards Board Intervention, Joint Standards Committees and Dispensations
- Review of Gifts and Hospitality Register
- Feedback on the Annual Assembly of Standards Committee
- Dispensations
- Request for a Dispensation from Dingley Parish Council
- Review of Members' Interests
- Work Programme – 2010/2011
- A pocket guide to Kettering Borough Council's Ethical Framework – 'Avoiding the Pitfalls'

In addition, the Standards Committee have had the opportunity to discuss the most recent Standards Board Bulletins as they are released.

FORWARD WORK PLAN

The forward work plan for 2010/11 is attached as an addendum to this Annual Report.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
2010/2011

Ongoing work	5th July 2010	18th October 2010	24th January 2011	28th March 2011
<p>Communicating and Promoting the Work of the Standards Committee</p> <p><i>(Through development of the Standards Website, publication of articles in the Council's magazines and circulation of information provided by Standards for England.)</i></p> <p>Provision of Training and Support to Members on the Code of Conduct</p> <p><i>(The Monitoring Officer to organise training throughout the year for members and officers of the Council, and town and parish councils as required, on Standards matters.)</i></p> <p>Review of the Council's Constitution</p> <p><i>(In accordance with Article 15 of the Constitution)</i></p>	<p>Review of the Whistleblowing Policy</p> <p>Corporate Code of Good Governance</p> <p>Review of Members and Officers Gifts and Hospitality Register</p> <p>Prepare Annual Report for Presentation to Full Council</p>	<p>Review of Complaints Handling and Ombudsman Investigations</p> <p>Review of Councillor/Staff Protocol</p>		<p>Review of Members' Interests</p>