

Annual Report to the Council Uttlesford District Council's Standards Committee 2008/09

Composition

The Standards Committee comprises 10 members, 4 elected members of the Council, 3 independent persons and 3 representatives of town and parish councils. The Committee is chaired by Mr Sean Brady, one of the independent persons. The Committee is supported by the Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, Mr Michael Perry.

Meetings during the year

There were 5 scheduled meetings of the Standards Committee during the Council year. Two further meetings were held for training purposes. In addition, a sub-committee met once to consider whether an allegation of a breach of the Code of Conduct should be passed for investigation or not; a further sub-committee met to consider a review of the decision not to pass the complaint for investigation; the Committee met to consider a report of the Monitoring Officer further to a reference from the Standards Board for England that there had been no breach of the Code of Conduct by a member and there was a hearing when a breach was found to have occurred although no sanction was imposed.

Highlights from the year

- Pursuant to the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 the Committee has taken on the responsibility for determining if an allegation of a breach of the Code of Conduct should be investigated.
- The Committee has formulated its approach on dealing with complaints of a breach of the Code of Conduct and has published guidance together with a complaints form on the Council's website so that complaints can be submitted online or manually.
- The Committee has recommended a protocol regarding the use of Council's resources by members.
- The Committee has recommended a policy for the publication of the Register of Members' Interests online.
- Committee members underwent training on members' interests, investigations and the procedures on how to deal with allegations of a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Future actions

- The Committee is currently working on an annual work programme.
- Statutory revisions to the Code of Conduct are currently being drafted. The Committee will review any changes to the legislation and make appropriate recommendations to the Council.
- The Committee will consider revising the Council's guidance for best practice on probity in planning, in the light of the Local Government Association's revised guidance.