

**Committee: STANDARDS**

**Agenda Item**

**Date: 12 March 2012**

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**Title: ANNUAL REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL**

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## Summary

1. It is considered good practice that the Standards Committee should make a report on an annual basis to Full Council. This report is to seek members' approval to this year's annual report intended to be presented to Full Council.

## Recommendations

2. That members approve the draft report for presentation to Full Council by the chairman of the Standards Committee.

## Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.  
Register of complaints.

## Impact

Communication/Consultation	None.
Community Safety	None.
Equalities	None.
Finance	None.
Health and Safety	None.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None.
Sustainability	None.
Ward-specific impacts	None.
Workforce/Workplace	None.

## Situation

4. The draft annual report details the changes to the Standards framework and the work undertaken by the committee during the year.

## Risk Analysis

There are no risks attached to this report.

## **Annual Report to the Council**

### **Uttlesford District Council's Standards Committee 2011/12**

#### **Background**

This is likely to be the last report to the Council of the Standards Committee in its present format. The Localism Act is expected to come into full force on 1 July 2012 and will abolish the current standards framework replacing it with a requirement to adopt a code of conduct which is largely left to the discretion of councils; sweeping changes to the law on registration and declarations of interest and the revocation of the power to impose sanctions. Although there will be a role for independent participation in considering breaches of the Code of Conduct sadly the Act disqualifies your existing independent members from fulfilling that function.

#### **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 – Legal and Monitoring Officer, Mr Michael Perry. One of the town and parish seats on the Committee became vacant at the may 2011 elections and has remained vacant since.

#### **Meetings during the year**

There were 3 scheduled meetings of the Standards Committee during the council year and in addition there was an extra-ordinary meeting to deal with the Code of Conduct after the Localism Bill received Royal Assent. In the light of the Localism Bill the Committees work during the year was concentrated on prospective changes to the standards framework much of which needed to be revisited after the Bill became and Act. This has resulted in the recommendation of constitutional changes to reflect the provisions of the Localism Act which it is understood will be proposed by the Constitution Working Group. It has also resulted in a proposed Code of Conduct which the Standards Committee recommend for adoption and new procedures for vetting complaints. In addition to this work programme the Committee continued to receive regular updates on decisions on of the First Tier Tribunal Local Government Standards in England.

Sub committees met on a number of occasions to consider allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct. 1 such allegations related to a parish councillors, the other 2 related to district councillors. The allegation against the parish councillor resulted in no action being taken. One complaint against a district councillor resulted in a finding that the member concerned had breached the Council's Code of Conduct but no sanction being imposed. This decision is currently subject to an appeal to the First Tier Tribunal – Local Government Standards in England. The other allegation was passed for investigation and this is ongoing.

#### **Future Actions**

Under transitional provisions the current Standards Committee will remain responsible for dealing with allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct made before the new provisions take effect. Thereafter a new Standards Committee constituted under the Localism Act will take over.