

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

MEETING: 30 MARCH 2008

**SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE**

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CLERK

1. Introduction

- 1.1 As Members are aware the Standards Board for England has required Monitoring Officers to complete quarterly returns on activity since the local assessment of complaints regime came into force on 8th May 2008.
- 1.2 It is also the intention of the Board to require an annual return in the near future (the format has not been settled). Accordingly, it is considered appropriate to prepare an annual report summarising the work of the Committee in relation to Standards issues over the last Civic year.

2. Meetings

The Committee will have held 3 meetings (on 30 June 2008, 22 September 2008 and 27 March 2009).

3. Matters Considered

The Committee has considered a number of matters including:

- 3.1 The assumption of the new responsibilities for the local assessment of complaints. A report was considered and procedures were approved at the meeting on 30 June 2008.

Elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting Members are asked to consider approving a handbook which consolidates all relevant procedures.

- 3.2 The Committee has not received any requests for dispensations.

4. Local Assessments

There have been no local assessments.

5. Training

Members of the Committee participated in a joint training workshop with Members of Sunderland City Council's Standards Committee and considered two scenarios to assist them in preparing for their new role as the local filter.

Further refresher training on the Code of Conduct will be undertaken as and when the Code is revised again.

6. Relationships

(i) Other Standards Committee

I have continued to organise occasional meetings of Chairs of Standards Committees and their respective Monitoring Officers in the region to share experiences and develop good practice.

(ii) Members

Members are given advice on queries and on declarations of interest.

(iii) The Public

Since the inception of the new arrangements, forms of complaints and guidance notes about Councillors can be downloaded from the Authority's website. Forms may also be obtained from Brigade HQ and Sunderland Civic Centre reception areas.

7. Register of Interests

In the interests of transparency it is proposed to put the register of Members' interests on the Authority's website. This accords with the Audit Commission's views.

8. Use of Resources

The Audit Commission's Annual Audit and inspection letter for the Authority is the subject of a report elsewhere on this agenda. The Authority achieved level four on the Use of Resources. The letter does not raise any concerns in respect of standards issues.

9. Conclusion

The Committee is invited to note and consider this report.