At a meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on FRIDAY, 28TH MAY 2010 at 1.00 p.m.

Present:-

Mr G.N. Cook in the Chair

Councillors M. Forbes, Shattock and Wakefield, together with Mr. J.P. Paterson and Councillor Hepple (Hetton Town Council).

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Shattock on her return to the membership of the Committee.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Tate, Mr. Stewart and Councillor Wilkinson (Hetton Town Council).

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26th March, 2010 (copy circulated) were submitted.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

Dates of Meetings of the Standards Committee 2010/11

The Chief Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise Members of the Committee of the dates of the Standards Committee meetings for the Municipal Year 2010/2011.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

2. RESOLVED that it be noted that the dates of the Standards Committee meetings for the Municipal Year 2010/2011 are as follows and that all meetings are scheduled to commence at 1.00 pm:-

Tuesday, 29th June, 2010
Thursday, 30th September, 2010
Friday, 26th November, 2010
Friday, 11th February, 2011
Friday, 25th March, 2011

2010 Annual Assembly of Standards Committee – A Place for Standards

The Chief Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) advising of the 2010 Annual Assembly of Standards Committees entitled 'A Place for Standards' to be held on 18th and 19th October at the International Convention Centre, Birmingham.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Assistant Chief Solicitor, Ms. Rhiannon Hood, briefed the Committee on the report; and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that any Member of the Committee wishing to attend the Conference contact the Monitoring Officer so that the necessary arrangements can be made on their behalf.

Activities for the Year Ahead

The Chief Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) seeking the Committee's views on the scope of its activities for the forthcoming civic year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Assistant Chief Solicitor, Ms. Rhiannon Hood, briefed the Committee on the current position.

The Chairman highlighted that the networking with Chairs of other Standards Committees worked well and that the meetings with the Leaders of the political groups of the Council were good.

Members of the Committee stressed the importance of further awareness raising and communication of the ethical agenda and the role of the Standards Committee with officers of the Council.

In response to the Chairman, Ms. Hood advised that regular training was undertaken to ensure officers of the Council had a broad awareness of the Code of Conduct and she advised that the next phase of the Community Leadership Programme would focus on these aspects to ensure there was an understanding of the above matters.

4. RESOLVED that the proposed range of activities be endorsed together with activities to ensure that the ethical agenda and an awareness of the role of the Council's Standards Committee are promoted.

Standards for England – Review of the Local Standards Framework

The Chief Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) advising that Standards for England had recently completed its review of the local standards framework and issued a report 'Local Standards 2.0 – the proportionality upgrade', which reflects on the first eighteen months of the operation of the local determination of complaints.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman commented that he welcomed the recommendation for a commitment to greater transparency for Members who are the subject of complaints stating that he felt they should not be kept 'in the dark' about a complaint about them.

5. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

Local Determination of Allegations of Misconduct

The Chief Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) advising that the investigation of the complaint received in respect of Councillor Wake had now been completed and that he was seeking to make arrangements for a meeting of a Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Assistant Chief Solicitor, Ms. Rhiannon Hood, briefed the Committee on the report.

Councillor M. Forbes advised that she considered herself to be conflicted out from serving on the Sub-Committee.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Standards Committee together with Councillor Tate, be appointed to serve on the Sub-Committee which will undertake the functions under Regulations 17 and 18.

(Signed) Mr G. N. COOK,
Chairman.