



***ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS  
COMMITTEE OF TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL  
2008 – 09***

# **CONTENTS**

- 1. INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**
- 2. SUMMARY OF WORK UNDERTAKEN**
- 3. COMPLAINTS, INVESTIGATIONS AND DETERMINATIONS**
- 4. TRAINING**
- 5. THE YEAR AHEAD**
- 6. CONTACT DETAILS**

**APPENDIX 1 - STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**APPENDIX 2 – STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PLAN FOR 2009/10**

**APPENDIX 3 – DIARY OF GENERAL MEETINGS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2009/10**

## **INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Welcome to the Annual Report for Telford & Wrekin Council Standards Committee. It has been a busy year for the Standards Committee particularly with the change to a local system for assessing Code of Conduct complaints. The Committee has ensured that there is a system in place so that all complaints can be considered fairly and objectively and appropriate action can be taken. Fortunately during the past year we have not had any matters which have resulted in findings being made against any Councillors from Telford & Wrekin.

However, the Standards Committee are keen to ensure that they keep elected members informed with regard to the changes in the ethical framework and provide appropriate training which is available to everybody.

The forthcoming year will again be challenging as we are expecting changes to the regulations concerning the ethical framework including changes to the Code of Conduct. In anticipation of those changes the Committee are undertaking a full review of Code of Conduct training and hope to provide training that is even more accessible and useful for all elected Members in the Borough of Telford & Wrekin.

*Andy Simpson*

Chairman of the Standards Committee

## SUMMARY OF WORK UNDERTAKEN

On 8 May 2008 a new framework was set up for considering Code of Conduct complaints. From that date any complaints about Borough Councillors or Parish and Town Councillors in the Borough of Telford & Wrekin started to be considered by Telford and Wrekin Council Standards Committee rather than the Standards Board for England which was the case previously. The Standards Committee have set up a Sub Committee to initially assess complaints and consider any new complaints and a review sub-committee if a decision of no further action was challenged by the person making the complaint. The Standards Committee have also made provision for hearing committees to consider any matter which proceeds to investigation. In order to ensure a fair and consistent decision making process the Standards Committee have set out a protocol to be followed by the Monitoring Officer upon the receipt of Code of Conduct complaints and the Committee has also agreed an assessment and review criteria in order to ensure that the same considerations are given to each individual complaint. Code of Conduct Complaint forms are available to the public from the Council website, main reception in Civic Offices and from Town or Parish Councils within the Borough.

There were four general meetings of the whole Standards Committee, four meetings of the Referral Sub-Committee and one meeting of the Review Sub-Committee during the last year. During the same period no Consideration meeting or Hearing Sub-Committees were required.

Training is continuing to be provided. In November 2008 an external trainer conducted two Code of Conduct training seminars at the Civic Offices which were made available for Telford & Wrekin Borough Councillors and Parish and Town Councillors in the Borough. The Committee have analysed the feedback following that training and have been planning changes to the training for the forthcoming year. The Standards Committee has also undertaken training with two separate training sessions being provided with particular emphasis on the new local system concerning the assessment of complaints. Further, the Chairman of the Standards Committee attended the annual assembly of Standards Committees arranged by the Standards Board for England that took place in October 2008.

The Standards Committee have agreed a work plan for the forthcoming year and some arrangements are already being made with regards to some of the work which is to be undertaken.

## COMPLAINTS, INVESTIGATIONS AND DETERMINATIONS

Since the new system came into effect on 8 May 2008 the following complaints have been received by Telford & Wrekin Council's Standards Committee:-

### **Councillors subject to a code of conduct complaint to the Standards Committee – 7**

Of the seven named above two of those Councillors were Telford & Wrekin Councillors (subject to a complaint both as Telford & Wrekin Councillors and also in their capacity as Parish Councillors), the remainder related to Parish Councillors within the Borough. In one case a complaint was made against two people who were no longer serving as Parish Councillors and accordingly those complaints were not pursued.

One of the four complainants was a Borough and Parish Councillor; the remaining complaints were made by members of the public.

## **OUTCOMES**

There were no referrals by the Standards Committee for investigation either by way of a local investigation or to the Standards Board for England

In the cases of five of the Councillors who were subject to a complaint the Referrals Sub-Committee decided that no further action should be taken in respect of the complaints.

In the case of two of the Parish Councillors who had been subject to a complaint the Referrals Sub Committee decided to direct the Monitoring Officer to undertake further action by providing training.

There was only one request by a complainant for a review of a decision not to take further action from a complaint. The Review Sub-Committee agreed to uphold the decision of the Referrals Sub-Committee and decided to take no further upon the complaint.

At the time of the introduction of the new system there were no matters which were ongoing that required resolution.

## **TRAINING**

On 12 November 2008 two Code of Conduct training seminars were held at the Civic Offices (one afternoon and one evening session). Training was provided by an external trainer and consisted of a PowerPoint presentation, including Code of Conduct case scenarios requiring audience participation. Detailed guidance notes were also provided.

The attendance at the training was as follows:-

- Borough Councillors – 28
- Parish Councillors (who are not also Borough Councillors) – 36
- Independent Members of Standards Committee - 1
- Officers - 22
- Others (for example Fire Authority members) – 10
- Parish Clerks – 4
- Scrutiny Co-optees - 2

Training was also provided to members of the Standards Committee on 28 April and 24 September 2008 respectively. Training dealt predominantly with the local assessment for Code of Conduct complaints in order to prepare members of the Committee for undertaking assessments, reviews etc.

In addition to formal training, ethical standards bulletins were released on a regular basis throughout 2008 and 2009. The bulletin contained information such as reminders to update Register of Interest forms, copies of the Standards Board for England's fact sheets on different sections of the Code of Conduct and information to promote Conduct of Conduct training.

## PROMOTING STANDARDS

The Standards Committee continued to promote ethical standards by providing the code of conduct training and making provision for the Ethical Standards Bulletin to be distributed to elected members in the Borough and senior council officers. The Committee aims to go further in the forthcoming year by providing training outside of the Civic Offices to make the training more easily available to Parish and Town councillors in the Borough.

## THE YEAR AHEAD

On 21 April 2009 the Standards Committee approved a work plan for the forthcoming year. Details of the plan are set out at Appendix 2.

## CONTACT DETAILS

Further information about the work of the Standards Committee and details of how to make a complaint regarding the conduct of a Councillor can be obtained from the following council officers:-

- Jonathan Eatough – Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer.  
Telephone 01952 383255  
email: [Jonathan.Eatough@telford.gov.uk](mailto:Jonathan.Eatough@telford.gov.uk)
- Matthew Cumberbatch – Group Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer.  
Telephone 01952 383255  
email: [Matthew.Cumberbatch@telford.gov.uk](mailto:Matthew.Cumberbatch@telford.gov.uk)
- Ian Ross – Group Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer.  
Telephone 01952 383255  
email [Ian.Ross@telford.gov.uk](mailto:Ian.Ross@telford.gov.uk)
- Phil Griffiths – Head of Democratic Services.  
Telephone 01952 383210  
email: [Phil.Griffiths@telford.gov.uk](mailto:Phil.Griffiths@telford.gov.uk)

Or alternatively by writing to the officers referred to above at:

Telford & Wrekin Council,  
Legal Services,  
Civic Offices,  
PO Box 215,  
Telford  
TF3 4LF