

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

PROTOCOL FOR PRESS ENQUIRIES ABOUT COMPLAINTS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE 9th April 2009

Report of the Monitoring Officer

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To enable the Committee to consider a draft Protocol for dealing with press enquiries about complaints.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) **That the Committee consider the attached draft Protocol and approve it with or without amendments.**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 As Members are aware, the new regime of local assessment of complaints has been in place since May 2008, and experience from the first year's complaints is useful in enabling the Committee to consider and review its procedures and protocols. Following a press enquiry in December 2008 about a complaint which had not yet been considered by the Assessment Sub-Committee, the Monitoring Officer and the Communications Manager felt that it would be helpful to develop a Protocol for dealing with press enquiries about complaints to the Standards Committee, and this was included in the Committee's work programme for the current year.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 A draft Protocol is appended to this report for the Committee's consideration.
- 2.2 The Protocol attempts to deal with all the possible stages of a complaint, and to ensure consistency with the legal requirements of the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008. As yet, however, the Assessment Sub-Committees of this Committee have not referred any complaints for investigation, and it may be that the Protocol will need to be amended in the light of any future experience in this respect.
- 2.3 Members will note that the Protocol authorises the Monitoring Officer to inform a subject member about a complaint prior to the meeting of the Assessment Sub-

Committee if it is clear that the press are aware of the complaint and the identity of the subject member. If the Committee is content with this approach, the procedure for the initial assessment of complaints will be amended to reflect this, and to ensure consistency with the Protocol.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 The Protocol has been prepared by the Monitoring Officer and the Council's Communications Officer, and has drawn on guidance issued by the Standards Board for England to council press officers..

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

4.1 The options open to the Committee are to approve the draft Protocol with or without amendments, or to decide that a Protocol is not necessary.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None directly arising from this report.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None directly arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The report has been prepared by the Monitoring Officer in her capacity as adviser to the Standards Committee.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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