

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF BURY



STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2010/2011

I have pleasure in presenting this Annual Report which gives Members an insight into the works of the Standards Committee.

The membership during 2010/2011 was:

Councillors Ken Audin, Roger Brown, Siobhan Costello, Yvonne Creswell, Ann Garner, Alan Quinn and Jack Walton.

The Independent Members were myself (Ken Wainwright), Anne Brown, David Gremson and Arthur Withington.

For 2011/2012, the Chair of the Committee will be Anne Brown.

At the meeting of Annual Council in 2009, appointments were made as follows:-

Anne Brown	-	Appointed until May 2012
Arthur Withington	-	Appointed until May 2013
David Gremson	-	Appointed until May 2014
Kenneth Wainwright	-	Appointed until May 2015

With effect from May 2012, it is proposed that advertisements seeking applications from persons wishing to become an Independent Member of the Standards Committee will be resumed.

In 2010/2011 the Assessment Sub-Committee considered seven complaints against Councillors: one of these was forwarded onto the Review Sub-Committee at the request of the complainant. One Hearing Panel was held.

We have carried out our duties this year against a backdrop of a Government committed to abolishing the Standards Board Regime. It is anticipated that Standards for England will cease to investigate complaints later this year prior to abolition in early 2012. In addition, the Government proposes to remove the First-tier Tribunal's jurisdiction over Member conduct; remove the national Code of Conduct for Councillors and the requirement to have a Standards Committee. The Government will allow Councils to choose whether or not they wish to have a local code or a Standards Committee; and create a criminal offence relating to failure to register or declare interests. Transitional arrangements will be introduced to deal with cases already in the system. AGMA have made representations to the Local Government Association on behalf of AGMA Standards Committee Chairs. In particular, clarification is being sought as to where the 500 to 1500 complaints currently dealt with by Standards for England will be dealt with in future; and on how the potential savings will materialise, given the added pressure on Monitoring Officers and the absence of a process in place to deal with an increase in complaints being handled locally.

It is the view of all AGMA Standards Committee Chairs that there should be some form of voluntary model Code of Conduct in place.

For the time being, the Standards Committee will continue to discharge its responsibilities on behalf of the Council and play its part in taking the Council forward during these challenging times. I would like to close by extending my thanks to all Members and Independent Members for their help and support during the last 12 months.

KEN WAINWRIGHT

CHAIR OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2010/2011