

**METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF BURY**



**STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2011/2012**

I have pleasure in presenting this Annual Report which gives Members an insight into the work of the Standards Committee over the last 12 months. The Standards Committee as we know it will cease to exist from July of this year. As such, much of our business this year has been to generate recommendations for your consideration as to how to take the Council's ethical arrangements forward in line with the provisions of the Localism Act.

The membership during 2011/2012 was:

Councillors Ann Audin, Ken Audin, Roger Brown, Mary D'Albert, Alan Quinn, Jim Taylor and Jack Walton.

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

As members are aware, this year we lost one of our stalwarts, Arthur Withington, who sadly passed away in Bury Hospice on 28 February. Tributes have quite rightly been paid to Arthur in recognition of his huge contribution to the work of the Committee which he chaired in 2009/2010. He has been greatly missed.

In 2011/2012 the Assessment Sub-Committee considered just one complaint against a Councillor which I feel reflects very favourably on the elected members of this Authority. I sincerely hope this trend continues.....and is even improved upon.

This has been a difficult year for us as Independent members as we have continued with our responsibilities in the full knowledge that the Localism Act has removed the position of Independent Member. The Act repeals Section 55 of the Local Government Act 2000, which provides for the current statutory Standards Committee. There will be no requirement for a Standards Committee. However, there will still be a need to deal with standards issues and case-work, and for that reason it has been recommended that a Standards Committee should continue. It will be a normal Committee of Council, without the unique features which were conferred by the previous legislation, whereby the four independent members were fully voting members. The Act also establishes a new category of "Independent Person" who must be consulted at various stages, but provides that the existing co-opted independent members cannot serve as Independent Persons for 5 years. The new Independent Person may be invited to attend meetings but are unlikely to be co-opted onto the Committee.

At the last meeting of the Committee in its current format, which took place on 3 April 2012, a series of recommendations on future arrangements for standards were put forward for the consideration of Council. However, some of the provisions of the Act necessitate the publication of regulations whilst we also await a definition of "Disclosable Pecuniary Interests." It is also intended to adopt a new Code of Conduct which will be agreed across the Greater Manchester Authorities.

Although I would have been standing down as an Independent Member this year, it is a matter of great personal regret that the role of the Independent Member in its current format has been dispensed with. I feel that we have built up an expertise in an area which is central to effective democratic control, as well as forging excellent relationships with elected members who have treated us and the role that we have carried out with utmost respect. I thank you all most warmly for this.

I would finally thank my fellow Independent Members and the Council Officers for their help and support.

**ANNE BROWN**

**CHAIR OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2011/2012**