

# STANDARDS COMMITTEE

## MINUTES

### 16 JUNE 2011

**Chairman:** \* Dr J Kirkland

**Councillors:** † Mano Dharmarajah \* Victoria Silver  
\* Brian Gate \* Simon Williams  
\* Paul Osborn

**Independent Persons:** \* Mr J Coyle \* Mr D Lawrence

\* Denotes Member present

† Denotes apologies received

### RECOMMENDED ITEMS

#### 51. Social Media Protocol

The Committee received a report which set out a draft Social Media Protocol for Members to consider whether it would be useful for the Council to adopt. Mrs Eileen Kinnear addressed the Committee and stated that in her view the protocol was unnecessary. In her view the Protocol did not address websites or blogging and did not contain any sanctions.

An officer reported to the Committee that:

- The Social Media Protocol had been based on the Guide to Blogging produced by Standards for England. The Guide had been presented to the Committee at its previous meeting;
- The Council would be conducting a training session on the Protocol. The training would be held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011;
- The Protocol provided a simplified version of the Guide to Blogging provided by Standards for England. The Protocol's scope had also

been extended to provide advice on various media forms, not just blogging;

- The Protocol was intended to provide assistance to conform with the Member's Code of Conduct;
- The Protocol also contained examples of how the First Tier Tribunal and Standards Committee have viewed cases involving social media.

During the discussion on this item, Members made a number of comments as follows:

- Members generally obeyed good standards of conduct and abided by the Nolan principles;
- It was important to recognise that the use of social media was still a developing area of legislation and case law. The protocol was a good start and it was expected that it would evolve over time. It would be helpful to have a date of revision for the protocol within a year or two, given that this was an evolving area;
- The document was clear and concise. It also provided clear advice on who could potentially be interpreted as being a close associate;
- The Protocol had to be based on the Code of Conduct as that constituted the legal framework that Members had to operate in. Any sanction against a Member had to be based on a breach of the Code of Conduct;
- That, although the Protocol would not be presented for approval by full Council by then, it should form the basis of the Members training event on social media scheduled for 30 June 2011.

**RESOLVED to Recommend (To Council):** That the Social Media Protocol be adopted and incorporated in the Council's Constitution.