



## **Standards Committee (Supplementary Agenda)**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Tuesday, 27 January 2009</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>6.15 pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Committee Room 3 - Wallasey Town Hall</b>

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## **AGENDA**

- 5. OMBUDSMAN CASES - PERFORMANCE UPDATE (Pages 1 - 2)**
- 6. DECLARATION OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY - UPDATE (Pages 3 - 4)**

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## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 27 JANUARY 2009 REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

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#### COMPLAINTS TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN –CURRENT PERFORMANCE

##### 1. **Executive Summary**

As part of the Action Plan agreed by this committee to address performance in relation to Ombudsman's Complaints this committee receives a quarterly report on response times. This reports sets out the current performance.

##### 2. **Current Performance**

- 2.1 For the quarter 01/09/08 – 31/12/08 the Council received 8 complaints. The average time it took to respond to the Ombudsman was 41 days (against a target of 28 days). This is a disappointing lapse in the previously significantly improved response times.
- 2.2 This is attributable mainly to 2 cases where there was a significant delay in the response. In one case (68 days) the Ombudsman contacted the client department directly. This meant that the case was not picked up by the monitoring process put in place by my department until the deadline for responding had already been passed. This issue has been raised at the Departmental Co-ordinators' Group. The other case (71 days) appears to have been caused by an error.
- 2.3 Whilst this performance is disappointing it is anticipated that the strong performance over the first half of the year and an improved performance in the final quarter will enable the overall target to be met. All staff involved will be reminded of the need to ensure that complaints are dealt with quickly and prioritised. This report will also be taken to Chief Officers Management Team.
- 2.4 I previously reported that the Finance Department will be taking over the co-ordination of Ombudsman's complaints. This will now be done with effect from 1 April 2009. Officers are in discussions to secure a seamless transition.

##### 3. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

##### 4. **Local Member Support**

There are no implications for individual wards arising directly from this report.

##### 5. **Equal Opportunity Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

##### 6. **Human Right Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

7. **Local Agenda 21 Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

8. **Community Safety Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

9. **Planning Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

10. **Background Papers**

There are no background papers

11. **Recommendations**

- (1) That the notes the content of this report.
- (2) That the Committee receives further reports on progress and performance.

BILL NORMAN

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

SG/LW. PR/S10/1  
27 January 2009

## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 27 JANUARY 2009 REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

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#### REGISTER OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

##### 1. **Executive Summary**

This report sets out current work taking place on the process for registering gifts and hospitality.

##### 2. **Registration of Gifts and Hospitality**

- 2.1 At the meeting of this committee the issue of registration of gifts and hospitality was raised by a member of the committee. The Committee resolved (minute 18 refers):

That the Committee receive a further report on the various issues relating to the registering of gifts and hospitality.

- 2.2 Members will be aware that the Council implemented a new software programme for its democratic processes which has been in operation since October 2008. The Council continues to develop the system and its uses. The register of member's interests is in the process of being transferred from the paper system on to the computer system. This will enable members to update their own entry on the register and it will be accessible via the Council's website to the public. Members will be sent an automatic reminder every 3 months of the need to update any changes to their interests.

- 2.3 It is intended that declarations of any gifts and hospitality received will also be entered directly on to the system in the same way. Work is taking place on this and the intention is that it will be completed by 31 March 2009. An issue has arisen over the obligation on members who are offered gifts or hospitality in their capacity as members of other authorities or boards to which they have been appointed by the Council, for example the Police Authority, the Fire and Rescue Authority or Merseytravel. This issue has been discussed at the Merseyside District Secretaries meetings (attended by the Chief Legal Officers and their deputies for the constituent authorities and the joint authorities). Guidance is also being sought from the Standards Board for England.

- 2.4 It is my intention to bring a further report to this Committee at its next meeting on draft guidance to members on this issue ahead of the implementation of the new system from 1 April 2009.

##### 3. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

##### 4. **Local Member Support**

There are no implications for individual wards arising directly from this report.

5. **Equal Opportunity Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

6. **Human Right Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

7. **Local Agenda 21 Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

8. **Community Safety Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

9. **Planning Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

10. **Background Papers**

There are no background papers

11. **Recommendations**

- (1) That the notes the content of this report.
- (2) That the Committee a further report on guidance to members on the declaration of gifts and hospitality and the implementation of the new system for registration.

BILL NORMAN

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

SG/LW. PR/S10/1  
27 January 2009