

## Paper H182

### **Seventh Annual Assembly of Standards Committees 13-14<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

As a new member I found it very useful to attend and the following notes may be useful.

The Case studies were good as were the individual sessions, e.g. Local Government Ombudsman.

- 1) Monitoring Officer should only tell the member a few details.  
The reason being that the Assessment is an administrative process and not a Hearing.
- 2) One complaint had 39 pages and 140 pages of appendices! (I think it was St Edmundsbury?)
- 3) It was estimated that the average cost of a Hearing was £3,500
- 4) If you decide to take “some other action” then you cannot return to an investigation.  
However sometimes an adjournment is good to see if the Member will comply.
- 5) It is legitimate to take account of the cost of an investigation in the decision making process.
- 6) Ben Page made an interesting observation based on his MORI survey results.  
The mere fact of advertising complaints or a Complaints procedure makes people think less well of and have less confidence in the Local Authority concerned.  
  
E.g. Police in an area had a plan called “Crack down on crack”  
This had the opposite effect than that intended.  
It raised the fear and awareness of a drugs culture in the area which was not there before.
- 7) Do not get drawn into the role and/or conduct of the Clerk as we have no jurisdiction.

8) A Dysfunctional Council can attract a need for training.

9) Alternative Action.

A good use is when there are “inadequate or incomplete protocols for use of authority resources”.

Suitability for Alternative Action implies No finding of Guilt and No finding of Facts according to a Ministerial statement in the Commons.

10) If Alternative Action has not taken place after 3 months it should be reported.

However the Monitoring Officer can then make a new complaint about a breach of the Code.

11) Local Government Ombudsman had a session and they receive 7000 written complaints a year, 3000 e-mailed and now 150 text message complaints.

Their remit is being extended in 2009 to cover private Care Homes and Schools, especially Special Needs Schools.

Serial complainers are cut off after two complaints.

LGO looks to see that the processes are correct rather than the merits of the case.

From April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 the LGO will not consider any case until the full Local Government processes have been fully exhausted.

The LGO web site has the protocol dealing with relationships with Standards Committees

Bob Feltwell.

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2009