

## **Torbay Council Standards Committee explained....**

Following a busy year's work, Torbay Council's Standards Committee is keeping up the momentum with a programme of initiatives aimed at encouraging members and officers to put high ethical standards at the heart of their work.

The committee chairman is Roger Heath, a former local authority Chief Executive.

Mr Heath said: "There is a statutory code of conduct for councillors which was introduced by the Government to improve standards of conduct by local councillors and to improve public perception of its democratic representatives at a local level.

"Included in the code is the expectation that councillors and council employees might have of one another. It is worth looking at and can be viewed on The Standards Board for England website, [www.standardsboard.gov.uk](http://www.standardsboard.gov.uk)

"At Torbay Council, we have a local protocol for dealing with issues covered by the code, and a further protocol which includes the responsibilities of senior officers in the event of the breakdown in the relationship between an employee and a councillor. Both these are also worth a moment of your time to ensure that you are aware of them and can be viewed on the Constitution section of Torbay Council's website, [www.torbay.gov.uk/index/council/councillorsdecisions/constitution.htm](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/index/council/councillorsdecisions/constitution.htm)

"It is essential that everyone is aware of the code and the protocols so that if a problem should arise, it can be addressed and dealt with promptly with as little confrontation as possible."

The Standards Committee consists of elected members and members of the public who are in the majority. It has the obligation of maintaining and upholding ethical standards in the council and the code.

Said Mr Heath: "The Committee on Standards in Public Life has consistently found that standards of conduct in local government are much higher than the public often perceive them to be.

"The purpose of the code of conduct and councils' Standards Committees is to maintain and promote those high standards of conduct so that the public can have confidence in local democracy and participate in it, whether by attending and speaking at council meetings or standing for election or simply casting a vote at election time."

In a report to the Standards Committee on 26 November (Report 252/2009), which you can read via the Agendas, Reports and Minutes section of the council website, the then Monitoring Officer, Keith Stevens, reviewed the committee's work over the last year and set out several initiatives planned over the coming 12 months.

Anthony Butler has now taken over the role of Monitoring Officer. He can be contacted on (20)7155 or via email at [anthony.butler@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:anthony.butler@torbay.gov.uk)