



Alderman Jim Dillon chaired the event and was followed by Susan Wilkin, Deputy Director from the Department of Infrastructure. Susan spoke about the Protocol for the Operation of Planning Committees, Schemes of Delegation and Pre-determination hearings.

The Head of Planning for Peterborough City Council and Fenland District Council, Mr Nick Harding then addressed the event and spoke about the importance of Ethics and Conduct in respect of the operation of a Planning Committee. He also referred to Site Visits, Time Management and the role of non committee members in planning matters. Mr Harding then responded to a number of questions from councillors specifically in respect of planning matters and lobbying.

Mrs Anderson provided an update on the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Councillors 2014. The 2014 Act:-

- Provides for the introduction of a mandatory Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors;
- Imposes a requirement for councillors to observe the Code; and
- Establishes the mechanisms for the investigation and adjudication of written complaints that a councillor has failed, or may have failed, to comply with the Code.

Mrs Anderson then responded to a number of questions from councillors in respect of how complaints made to LGES are assessed and investigated and referred to the statistics of complaints received by LGES since 2014.

She also discussed the recent Public Hearing at which Councillor Patrick Clarke (Newry, Mourne and Down District Council) was found to have breached the Code of Conduct in respect of the following:

- Paragraph 4.1a of the Code: The Respondent holds public office under the law and he must act lawfully
- The Public Duty Principle: He had a duty to uphold the law and to act on all occasions in accordance with the public trust placed in him
- Paragraph 2.7 of the Code: He had to observe the Code when giving the impression he was acting in the role of a councillor; and
- Paragraph 4.2 of the Code: He conducted himself in a way which could reasonably be regarded as bringing his position as a councillor, or his council, into disrepute.

Mr Clarke was subsequently disqualified from being a councillor for three years on 20 October 2016 when the Hearing was re-convened.