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Independent overview

Does the standards committee have Terms of Reference?

- Yes
- No

What help do members receive on following the Code of Conduct?

General training as part of their induction, personal advice on request from the monitoring officer, and pro-active advice from the monitoring officer and other legal and committee staff following consideration of council business and their respective interests.

Does the standards committee have a forward work plan?

- Yes
- No

If yes, who outside of the standards committee is involved in agreeing the forward work plan? Please explain below.

Apart from the committee, the Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services are involved, and the Chairman also speaks regularly with the Leader about major items

Is the standards committee given a role in reviewing amendments to the authority's constitution (or standing orders where appropriate)?

- Yes
- No

Standards committee meetings

Please use the table below to indicate how many times between 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2009 the standards committee has met and for what reasons.

Reason for meeting	Number of times met between 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2009
--------------------	---

General meeting of whole standards committee	6
Training	3
Assessment sub-committee	6
Review sub-committee	0
Consideration meeting	2
Hearing	0
Other	0

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Standards committee - annual report

Does the standards committee produce an annual report on its own work?

- Yes No

Is the annual report received by a meeting of the full authority?

- Yes No

Is the annual report sent to all members?

- Yes No

Is the annual report sent to all senior officers?

- Yes No

How is the annual report publicised to the general public?

In reports to Full Council and available on PCC website

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Standards committee - promoting standards

What else does the standards committee do to communicate its role and the importance of high standards internally within the authority to members and officers?

Chair and Vice Chair and at least one other member attend each Council meeting to be a visible presence, and speak informally to members about items of business, and standards generally
Occasional training sessions run for all members, and parish councils

What else has the standards committee done to promote confidence in local democracy to the wider public?

Work has mainly focused internally to date, but the committee is planning to be involved in Local Democracy week this year, and is considering as part of its work programme how it might promote confidence in local democracy

Has the authority, or the standards committee in particular, considered how it will monitor and ensure high standards of behaviour when the authority is working in partnership with other organisations?

• Yes No

Please provide examples.

The monitoring officer and Democratic services team have been considering this item and putting appropriate governance arrangements in place for partnership working is an ongoing area of work for the coming year. The standards committee in particular has not yet considered this item specifically, but members are made aware that high standards of

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Standards committee - training

Between 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2009, has the authority assessed the training and development needs of members in relation to their responsibilities on standards of conduct?

- Yes No

What training needs were identified?

Need to train all members of Standards Committee in relation to the operation of the new regime for assessment of complaints

Training for all members of Planning committee in relation to standards and pre-determination and bias

Please provide a list of training and development opportunities that have been provided to members and officers in the period from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009, that are relevant to ensuring high standards. Your list should include any training that relates to the operation of the local standards framework eg local assessment and hearings.

2 sessions for Standards Committee working through the Standards Board assessment training sessions / role play
One session with an external trainer in relation to standards hearings
Presentations to Parish Council liaison committee in relation to new assessment regime
Regular training sessions for PLanning Committee members

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Leadership

How often has the standards committee, or its chair, met the chief executive to discuss ethical issues in the last 12 months (from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009)?

None

Please also provide an overview of what the meetings were about.

There have been no formal meetings with the Chief Executive but the Chair speaks with her on a regular basis after Full Council meetings

How often has the standards committee, or its chair, met the leader of the council to discuss ethical issues in the last 12 months (from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009)?

Two

Please also provide an overview of what the meetings were about.

General discussions about standards in the authority, the promotion of high standards of ethical behaviour, the role of Cabinet members in promoting this, and a general discussion about the work of the Standards Committee

How often has the standards committee, or its chair, met the other party group leaders to discuss ethical issues in the last 12 months (from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009)?

None

Please also provide an overview of what the meetings were about.

Does the standards committee, or its chair, have regular access to the monitoring officer? How regular?

Yes, the Monitoring officer attends all standard committees and other hearings (unless conflicted out) and there are also informal discussions inbetween meetings, and at the Council meetings

How many times in the last 12 months (from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009) has the standards committee chair been invited to address a full authority meeting?

One

Does the monitoring officer sit on the corporate management team, or equivalent?

- Yes No

Has an executive member (or senior member where appropriate) been given portfolio responsibility for standards?

- Yes No

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Complaints

Can the public access information, from the authority website, about how to make a complaint against a member?

- Yes No

What else has the authority done to advertise the complaint process on member conduct to the general public?

Advertised in local newspaper when introduced.

Has the authority sought feedback from any of those people involved in an allegation of member misconduct about their satisfaction with the member conduct complaint process?

For example has the authority sought feedback from the complainant, witnesses or person against whom the allegation was made? Please choose from responses below.

No, have not sought feedback

How does the authority communicate the outcome of investigations into member conduct to:

a) members

By letter to the individual members concerned, or meeting if appropriate, general information about the numbers of complaints in the annual report.

b) officers

If officers are involved as witnesses the outcome is communicated by letter, or meeting if appropriate. Otherwise the outcome is not communicated to officers

c) the general public

Appropriate notices will be placed when required.

In allegations into member conduct which have NOT resulted in investigation, such as those allegations which have not been referred for investigation and those which have resulted in other action, how does the authority communicate the outcome to:

a) members

Only to the member concerned, by letter.

b) officers

By letter to those officers concerned.

c) the general public

The outcome is not communicated to the general public except in the annual public report to council

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Member officer relations

Does the authority have a protocol for relations between members and officers?

- Yes No

How is the protocol communicated to officers and members?

It is part of the Constitution and is explained to officers and members as part of their induction process

What is the mechanism for reviewing the effectiveness of this protocol?

It is reviewed regularly by the Monitoring Officer who will refer it to both the standards committee and employment committee if review or amendments are considered required

Does the authority include training on the importance of high standards of behaviour in the inductions of new members and officers?

- Yes No

Does the authority have informal mechanisms for dealing with member/officer and member/member disputes?

- Yes No

Please provide details of any mechanisms and, if possible, provide an example where this has been used.

The Monitoring Officer, the Chief Executive, and the Chair and Vice Chair of Standards Committee (both of whom are trained as mediators) all make themselves available to deal informally with such matters. The most appropriate is chosen to deal with the particular circumstances arising. This has been done on a few occasions particularly involving member and

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Registering member interests

Is the member register of interests accessible to the public on the authority website?

- Yes
- No

Is the register of gifts and hospitality available to the public on the authority website?

- Yes
- No

What does the authority do to signal to members the importance of declaring interests and completing the register of interests and the register of gifts and hospitality?

Part of induction process, followed by annual letter to all members asking them to review and update their interests where appropriate
All committee clerks and legal advisers give pro-active advice at committees relating to interests

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Officer conduct

Does the authority have a code of conduct for senior officers?

- Yes
- No

Does the authority compile a register of senior officers' interests?

- Yes • No

Does the authority compile a register of senior officers' gifts and hospitality?

- Yes
- No

is the senior officers' register of gifts and hospitality available to the public on the authority website?

- Yes • No

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Optional questions

The following questions are optional; you do not have to complete them if you do not wish to. However, this information would be useful to us in helping us to raise ethical standards.

On what issues, if any, would you appreciate more support or guidance on from the Standards Board for England?

The Standards Board for England, the Improvement and Development Agency and the Audit Commission have developed a toolkit that authorities can use to assess the ethical governance arrangements in their authority, and also to identify improvements.

Has your authority used the ethical governance toolkit?

- Yes
- No

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