

STANDARDS COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 4
21 OCTOBER 2009	PUBLIC REPORT

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY MONITORING OFFICER		
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WORK PROGRAMME

<p>R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S</p> <p>1. Members are asked to consider and approve the work programme for the Standards Committee for the remainder of the civic year</p>
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1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Deputy Monitoring Officer has agreed with the Chair of the Standards Committee to develop a work programme for the remainder of the civic year.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to seek views from the members of the Committee about the proposals contained within the work programme.

3. WORK PROGRAMME

- 3.1 The purpose of a work programme is not only to give direction and certainty to the Standards Committee but it can assist also in identifying improvements to the corporate governance of the Council.

- 3.2 Since the introduction of the local referrals process (referring complaints about members directly to the Standards Committee), it is commonplace for the Standards Committee to become identified solely with that function. This Committee however might also usefully play a role in other corporate governance matters. The work programme can identify matters that the Standards Committee might wish to participate in, hopefully improving the governance profile of the Council as a result.

- 3.3 The work programme consists of two sections: (1) work that will repeatedly come to the Standards Committee for review and (2) work that is specific to current issues. Each of these areas is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Training

- 3.4 The statutory functions of the Monitoring Officer under the Local Government Act 2000 include a requirement to ensure training for members of the Committee and Parish Councils. The work programme therefore comprises several matters related to training: annual training on the Code of Conduct for all Standards Committee members, other Council members and parish clerks and chairs, training for Standards Committee members on the assessment of complaints, Standards conference feedback and a review of new guidance issued by Standards for England (the revised title for the Standards Board).

Committee governance

- 3.5 The Standards Committee might want to review its work programme at the beginning of the civic year and if necessary, throughout the year. It could also review the quarterly and

annual returns which the Monitoring Officer is obliged to return to Standards For England concerning its performance in relation to the assessment process. It might also wish to consider a review of its terms of reference which must be reported to full Council for approval.

Corporate governance

- 3.6 The Committee might wish to play a role also in the corporate governance of the Council. The Council is assessed by the Audit Commission annually on its governance arrangements. The Committee may wish to be involved in that process by considering ways in which it might contribute to the governance arrangements within the Council.
- 3.7 The Standards Committee could also have a role in the constitutional arrangements of the Council. Sound advice given in the Planning Code of Good Practice and the Member & Officer protocol can help members to avoid complaints being made about their behaviour to the Standards Committee. This can be a positive and pro-active role for Standards Committee in assisting other Councillors.

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Clerks to each of the Parish Councils was consulted in relation to the work programme prior to this meeting and invited to make comments or attend this meeting. Any comments received will be reported verbally at the meeting.

5 ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- 5.1 This report is very much a discussion topic for the Standards Committee to give the Deputy Monitoring Officer some direction about the future direction of the Committee. Members are invited to give their views on the work programme and to make any suggestions on the topic proposed. It is anticipated that the work programme will be underpinned by the Monitoring Officer submitting papers to the Standards Committee for members' views each month.

6 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that the Standards Committee have a structured approach to its workload for the coming civic year.

7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Standards Committee could receive reports from officers as they become relevant. This option is not preferred as unlike other committees there is only one officer, the Monitoring Officer (or her Deputies) who is responsible for bringing matters to the attention of the Committee. The work programme will assist in work planning for those officers.

8 IMPLICATIONS

The Standards Committee has certain statutory obligations in relation to training on the Code of Conduct and assessment of complaints. Other workload is at the discretion of the Standards Committee.

9 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

10 APPENDICES

Work programme for Standards Committee.