



**AGENDA ITEM: 5**

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE:  
19 MAY 2009**

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**Report of: Council Secretary and Solicitor**

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**SUBJECT: STANDARDS BOARD ONLINE ANNUAL RETURN 2008/09**

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District wide interest

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To advise Members of the response provided in the Standards Board Online Annual Return 2008/09.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That the contents of the Standards Board Annual Return 2008/09 be noted.

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**3.0 BACKGROUND**

3.1 On 20 April the Standards Board launched their online annual return questionnaire. The focus of the quarterly return is to collect case related data, the annual return provides Standards Committees with the opportunity to report on activities and arrangements for promoting and supporting high standards of ethical conduct.

3.2 Introduced via email to monitoring officers, it works in a similar way to the quarterly return. Monitoring officers log onto the form using a secure password and are then guided through a series of questions about the following topics:

- activities of standards committees
- the role of leaders in promoting high standards
- training
- communicating the complaints process and outcomes
- member-officer relations
- communicating the register of member interests
- officer conduct

3.3 The Standards Board have advised that any information collected from annual returns will be used to improve performance, champion the work of Standards Committees, and to ensure that they have an effective overview of local standards frameworks. In particular they will:

- Collect notable practice examples of Standards Committee activities which can then be disseminated. These activities and the local authorities that provide them will be showcased in their Annual Review document in a section about the local standards framework.
- Identify gaps in the local standards framework. An overview of the local standards framework will enable them to identify strengths and weaknesses of local arrangements. In turn, this will allow them to mitigate some risks by prompting where they should be producing guidance or seeking policy changes in response to emerging national trends. It will also help them to identify those authorities who could be experiencing difficulties and may require support and advice.

3.4 The annual return is a larger questionnaire than the quarterly return, so the Standards Board allocated a four-week submission window during which Standards Committees could submit their return. The deadline for submitting the completed return was Friday 15 May 2009, a copy is attached at Appendix 1.

#### **4.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

4.1 These matters relate to the promotion of high ethical standards at a local level.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial or resource implications arising from this report other than officer time in completing the return.

#### **6.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

6.1 The Standards Board procedures have been followed in relation to the submission of information for the Annual Return.

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#### **Background Documents**

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

#### **Equality Impact Assessment**

There is no evidence from an initial assessment of an adverse impact on equality in relation to the equality target groups.

#### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Standards Board Annual Return – 11 May 2009