



AGENDA ITEM: 11

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE:
27 OCTOBER 2009**

Report of: Council Secretary and Solicitor

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SUBJECT: THE STANDARDS FORUM

Wards affected: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the introduction by Standards for England of an online Standards Forum and seek agreement to provide details to Standards for England of Standards Committee members who would like to join.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the registration of the Council Secretary and Solicitor (as the Authority's Monitoring Officer) of the Standards Forum be noted and the Legal Services Manager (as the Authority's Deputy Monitoring Officer) also be registered as a user of the online Forum.
- 2.2 That nominations be sought from Members of the Standards Committee wishing to become 'registered users' of the on-line Forum and the details of those nominated be forward to Standards for England.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In September 2009 Standards for England created an online Forum for Monitoring Officers and members of Standards Committees to share ideas and experiences of the local standards framework.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The Standards Forum, an online forum, is for registered users only.
- 4.2 The Monitoring Officer has been automatically registered by Standards for England as a user of the Forum.

4.3 All Forum users will be asked to sign up to the Standards Forum policy (attached at Appendix 1) before they can enter the Forum for the first time.

4.4 The Forum will give users an opportunity to share information, ideas and experiences of the local standards framework. Its aims are to provide an online community where users can:

- Network and communicate directly with each other
- Ask questions and share experiences
- Share best practice
- Recommend investigators
- Share independent committee members
- Experiment with joint-working
- Discuss any relevant topics

5.0 ISSUES

5.1 The introduction of the online Forum allows for all members of the Standards Committee to become “registered users” and have access to a Forum where information on the experiences of the local standards framework can be discussed.

5.2 Paragraph 4.4 above lists some of the issues that are likely to be raised through the forum.

5.3 Appendix 1 details the Standards Forum Policy of the Forum Rules, Terms of Use and Privacy Policy governing all activity in the Standards Forum.

6.0 PROPOSALS

6.1 Nominations are sought from members of the Standards Committee to become ‘registered users’ of the online forum and for permission for their details to be forwarded to Standards for England.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

7.1 There are no significant sustainability or community strategy implications.

8.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no significant financial and resource implications directly arising from this report.

9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 Members attention is drawn to the content of the Standards Forum Policy produced by Standards for England in relation to the Forum Rules, Terms of Use and Privacy Policy.

9.2 By accessing and using the Forum a Standards Committee members will be acting in their official capacity and the Code of Conduct will apply.

10.0 CONCLUSION

10.1 The introduction of the Standards Forum by Standards for England gives an opportunity for Standards Committees and Officers to join an online community enabling registered users to share good practice, make recommendations and discuss topics relating to local standards framework. It is for Members of the Standards Committee to decide if they wish to join the online forum.

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 for England – Standards Forum Policy