

Appendix



Monday 11 May 2009



Confidence in local democracy

Annual return

Summary

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Independent overview

Does the standards committee have Terms of Reference?

Yes

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

Annual Code of Conduct Training Session held for All Standards Committee Members, District and Parish Councillors and training pack circulated to all, including those who can't attend. Code of Conduct is part of the Induction Training for District Councillors. Ad hoc advice on the Code of Conduct regularly given to both Parish & District Members.

Does the standards committee have a forward work plan?

Yes

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

The Monitoring Officer, Chief Executive and Leader.

Is the standards committee given a role in reviewing amendments to the Authority's Constitution (or Standing Orders where appropriate)?

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	4
Training	4
Assessment sub-committee	9
Review sub-committee	4
Consideration meeting	1
Hearing	0
Other	0



Standards committee - annual report

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

No



Standards committee - promoting standards

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

Standards Committee Members attend the Annual Code of Conduct Training Seminar and are introduced to Members and Officers in attendance. Those in attendance are given an overview and the work of the Committee. The work of the

Committee is also regularly highlighted in the Chief Executive's weekly newsletter to Members and Officers, called '7 Days'. A programme of visits are ongoing for Standards Committee Members to Parish Councils.

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

Press releases and information provided on the internet

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

Please provide examples.

The Constitution for the Edge Hill University/West Lancs District Council Forum provides for the Code of Conduct to apply - 7 principles for the holders of public office is part of the constitution. Lancashire Local and the Local Strategic Partnership also contain within their constitution Standards and Propriety aspects. Appropriate terms and conditions are also established in Partnership Contracts.



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?

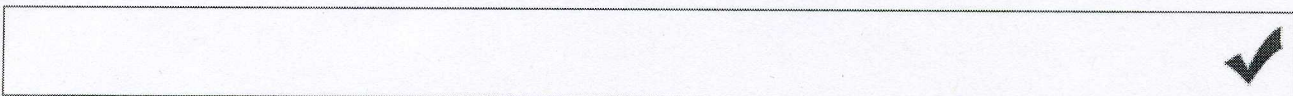
Yes

What training needs were identified?

Code of Conduct Training for all District and Parish Councillors, Training on Initial Assessment, Review and Hearing processes, Planning Code Training.

Please provide a list of training and development opportunities that have been provided to members and officers in the period from 01/04/2008 and 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, e.g. local assessment, hearings etc.

12 September 2008 - Standards Committee Training - Assessment of Complaints and Standards Committee Hearings 11 November 2008 - Standards Committee Training - Local Filter of Complaints 20 November 2008 - Code of Conduct Training - District and Parish Councillors 19 February 2009 - Planning Code of Good Practice - All Members and relevant officers



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)?

One

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

An informal discussion.

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)?

One

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

The challenges of handling standards locally.

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)?

Three

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

The Leader of the Labour Group is a Member of the Standards Committee

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

Regularly at Standards Committee, at Chairman's Briefings which are normally held prior to any Committee meeting informally via e-mail and on the phone and at training sessions.

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?

None

Does the monitoring officer sit on the Corporate Management Team, or equivalent?

Yes

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

Yes

	
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Complaints

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

Yes

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

Included a notification on the Public Notice Board outside the building including information on the Web Site. Notified via e-mail all members of staff and all Parish Councils.

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 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 subject member. By inclusion of statistics at the next meeting of the Standards Committee. By publishing the Notice of Finding.

b) officers

By letter to the relevant Parish Clerk. By publishing the Notice of Finding. By inclusion of statistics at the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

c) the general public

Public Notice in a Local Newspaper. On the Council's web site.

How does the authority communicate the outcome of allegations into member conduct which have NOT resulted in an investigation (for example those allegations which have not been referred for investigation and those allegations which have resulted in other action) to:

a) members

By letter to the subject member. By inclusion of statistics on the next meeting of the Standards Committee. By e-mail to the Leader and Opposition Leader and Standards Committee.

b) officers

By e-mail to the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive. By letter to the relevant Parish Clerk.

c) the general public

By inclusion of statistics on the next meeting of the Standards Committee. By maintaining a register which can be viewed at the Council Offices.



Member officer relations

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

Yes

How is the protocol communicated to officers and members?

The protocol is included in the Council's Constitution.

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

The Protocol is intended to be a 'live' document and can be reviewed from time to time to reflect changing circumstances.

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


Yes

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

Yes

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

Boardly discussion involving the Chief Executive, CSS, Member concerned and Leader or the relevant Political Group.



Registering member interests

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

No

Please briefly explain whether there is any particular reason why not.

Our understanding is that this is in accordance with SBE Guidance (2007) and there is a risk of breaching the Data Protection Principles if details of the register are published on the internet without the Members' concerned prior permission.

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

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?

An item is included on every committee agenda 'Declarations of Interests' with a Check List to assist Members in deciding if they have an interest. Members are sent a reminder annually of their requirement to ensure that their register of interest form is up-to-date. Newly elected members are written to advising them of the 28 day deadline for completing their register of interest form.

Officer conduct

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

Yes

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

Yes

If yes, is the register of senior officers' interests available to the public on the authority website?

No

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

Yes

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

No

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?

Refined Guidance with worked examples complying with the Regulations and not conflicting with any other Guidance given.

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?

No

If no, has your authority considered using the ethical governance toolkit?

Yes