



Annual Return form - 2010

Authority name West Lancashire Borough Council
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PART 1: COMMUNICATION

Annual Report

Does the standards committee produce an annual report?

Yes

What does the report contain?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A personal statement by the standards committee chairman | <input type="checkbox"/> Information about the members of the standards committee |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The role of the standards committee | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The standards committee terms of reference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information about the Code of Conduct | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statistical information about complaints that have been received |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information about the length of time taken dealing with complaints | <input type="checkbox"/> A summary of complaints which have led to investigation, sanction or other action |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Details about training/events provided | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The forward work plan of the standards committee |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Please describe what "Other" contents are in the report.

Membership and an overview of the previous years work.

How is the standards committee annual report circulated?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sent to all senior officers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sent to all members |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sent to parish/town councils | <input type="checkbox"/> Available on the authority intranet |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available as a specific item on the authority website | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available in the standards committee papers published on the authority website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Included as a full authority meeting agenda item | <input type="checkbox"/> Publicised in local press |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distributed to households | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available at authority offices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not circulated outside of the standards committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

The report is "Available as a specific item on the authority website", please provide the web address.

http://www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/council__democracy/councillors/councillors_code_of_c

The report is "Available in the standards committee papers published on the authority website", please provide the web address.

<http://webdocs.westlancsdc.gov.uk/coins/>

Publicising Complaints

How can the public access information about how to make a complaint against a member?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through a 'compliments and complaints' type section of the council website | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through the standards committee section of the website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complaints leaflets available from the authority | <input type="checkbox"/> Included as part of a council newsletter |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advertised through parish councils | <input type="checkbox"/> Information is not available to the public |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

The information is on the "compliments and complaints' type section of the council website", please provide the web address.

http://www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/council__democracy/contact_us/comments_and_feed

The information is on "standards committee section of the website", please provide the web address.

http://www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/council__democracy/councillors/councillors_code_of_c

Please describe the "Other" places the public can access this information.*

Public Notice Board

How can the public access information about the outcome of initial assessment decisions?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Written summary available for public inspection | <input type="checkbox"/> All initial assessment decisions are publicised in the local press |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicised in the local press only if the subject member agrees | <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment decisions published on the authority website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Articles published in the authority newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

How can the public access information about the outcome of investigations?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hearings are open to the public | <input type="checkbox"/> All investigation outcomes are publicised in the local press |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Publicised in the local press only if the subject member agrees | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published on the authority website |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decision notices are available for public inspection | <input type="checkbox"/> Articles in the authority newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Do you have a mechanism in place for measuring the satisfaction of all those involved in allegations of misconduct? For example the member, complainant and witnesses.

No

Communicating the role and work of the standards committee and standards generally

What does the authority do to promote the work of the standards committee and standards generally to the rest of the authority (i.e. internally)?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated standards committee pages on intranet | <input type="checkbox"/> Standards committee has its own newsletter / bulletin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standards committee issues briefing notes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Articles in employee newsletter / bulletin / newspaper |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee independent members observe other authority meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> Standards committee independent members contribute to other authority meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

How can the public access information about your standards committee?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dedicated standards committee section on the authority website | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Within 'council and democracy' type section of website |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethical standards issues have been included in the local press / media | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee minutes, agendas, and reports are available to the public |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leaflets and/or posters are placed in public buildings | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Places articles in the authority newsletter / bulletin / other publication |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee meetings are observed by members of the public | <input type="checkbox"/> Information is not available to the public |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Please provide the web address for the standards committee section on the authority website.

http://www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/council__democracy/councillors/councillors_code_of_c

Please provide the web address for information within the council and democracy section of your website.

http://www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/council__democracy/councillors/councillors_code_of_c

What else does the authority do to promote the work of the standards committee and standards generally to the public and other partners?

Members of the Standards Committee attend parish council meetings.

Monitoring Officer attends Parish Clerks Mtg.

Local Democracy Week - schools are invited in.
Monitoring Officer attends other organisations.

PART 2: INFLUENCE

How does the standards committee communicate ethical issues to the senior figures within your authority (for example the Chief Executive and Leader of the Authority, Party Leaders)?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Formal meetings between standards committee members and senior figures specifically set up to discuss standards | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal discussion on particular standards issues |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior figure attendance at standards committee meetings | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Officer is a member of or attends Corporate Management Team (or equivalent) meetings |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Executive or senior member has portfolio responsibility for standards | <input type="checkbox"/> Chair (or other standards committee member) addresses full authority meeting(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

How do the senior figures in your authority demonstrate strong ethical values?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through a strongly promoted whistle-blowing policy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> By ensuring there are references to ethics in the authority vision / objectives |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrating appropriate behaviours | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior figure(s) makes personal commitment to standards in statements to public/employees |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through any other method | |

Describe the "Other" ways that this is achieved.

Meet annually with Standards Committee to discuss
Divisional Managers attend Annual Code of Conduct Training

Does your authority have a protocol for partnership working that outlines the standards of behaviour expected of all those working in partnership?

Yes

What mechanisms does the authority use for dealing with member/officer and/or member/member disputes?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal discussion/mediation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Officer mediation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chair of standards committee mediation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior figure mediation (e.g. Chief Executive) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advice from Human Resources department | <input type="checkbox"/> Solicitor / legal adviser consulted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Informal hearing | <input type="checkbox"/> No mechanisms other than normal complaints process |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Describe the "Other" mechanisms used.

Protocol on Member/Officer Relations - different mechanism for different situations
Committee dispute - referred to Leader By Chairman
Chief Officer & Chairman/Portfolio Holder dispute - referred to C Ex & Leader
Arbitration between Member and Officer - To Chief Officer of relevant division, then Monitoring Officer, then Chief Exec if needed.

PART 3: TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010, has the authority assessed the training and development needs of authority members in relation to their responsibilities on standards of conduct?

Yes

If yes, what needs were identified?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Introduction to the Code of Conduct | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elements of the Code of Conduct |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The role and responsibilities of the standards committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance/behaviour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other |

Describe the "Other" needs that were identified.

Independent Member Training prior to appointment
Assessment, Review & Hearings
Standards for England Conference

What training/support was provided during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Introduction to the Code of Conduct | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elements of the Code of Conduct |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Role and responsibilities of the standards committee | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance/behaviour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other |

Describe the "Other" training/support provided.

Assessment, Review & Hearings
Visits to Parish Council & Borough Council Meetings
Standards Forum

Who received training/support?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee chair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Independent members |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other standards committee members | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All authority members |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specific authority members with particular needs (e.g. new members, planning committee members) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other |

Which "Other" people received training?

West Lancs Area Committee of Parish & Town Councils

What methods were employed to give training/support?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops) | <input type="checkbox"/> External trainer/speaker |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> One on one training | <input type="checkbox"/> Joint/regional training event |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online learning | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Guidance notes/briefing materials |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards for England materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance toolkit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

In which areas of the Code of Conduct has training/support been provided?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Respect | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal/Prejudicial Interests |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use of resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bullying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disrepute | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Predisposition, Pre-determination and bias |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confidentiality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

What other training/support has been provided on areas of an authority member's

role or activities they may engage in?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairing skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Lobbying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Predetermination, Predisposition and bias | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Blogging and/or the use of social media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electioneering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Freedom of Information (FOI) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other |

Describe the "Other" training/support provided.

Corporate Health & Safety
Local Assessment
Overview & Scrutiny
Equality & Diversity
Attracting Resources to the Ward
The Economic Study
'Gypsy & Travellers'
Media Training
Code of Conduct
Neighbourhood Management
Car Parking
Crime & Disorder

In general, how well attended was the training provided?

50-75%

Please give a brief overview of how standards issues are covered in your induction process for new members of the authority?

Information is provided in the induction pack & the Monitoring Officer gives a short presentation on general obligations and register of interests.

In which areas of the role and responsibilities of the standards committee has training/support been provided for standards committee members? Please tick all that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial assessments | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other action/mediation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reviews | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Investigations |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hearings | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sanctions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

PART 4: INVESTIGATIONS

Have any investigations been completed during the period 1 April 2009 - 31 March 2010? Yes

How many investigations have been completed during this period?

6

Have any of the investigations used external investigators? Yes

Of the investigations completed during the period, for how many have external investigators been used?

6

Overall, what was your principle reason for out-sourcing the investigation(s)?

Lack of staff resources

What type of external investigator(s) did you use?

Employee of another authority

Self-employed investigator

Private law firm

Other

For the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010, what was the approximate total cost of fees paid to the external investigator(s) for completed cases?

£13285.00

Please provide a brief overview of the processes you have in place to ensure the quality of local investigations.

Independent Investigator previously used to work for SBE and now works for well respected firm of Solicitors adopting quality standards and is on NWLC Partners Panel
MO checks quality of Reports

PART 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

Has your authority provided training for parish councillors during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?

Yes

If yes, what topics did the training cover?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom of Information (FOI) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confidential information |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lobbying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dual-hatted members | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Code of Conduct generally |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal and prejudicial interests | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bullying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

What methods were employed to give training/support?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops) | <input type="checkbox"/> External speakers |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> One on one training | <input type="checkbox"/> Joint/regional event |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Guidance notes/briefing materials | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards for England's materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CALC speakers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Part of wider parish liaison meeting |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

What "Other" methods were used?

NALC Session

In general, how well attended was the training for parish councillors?

25-50%

Has your authority provided training for parish clerks during the period 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010?

Yes

What topics did the training for parish clerks cover?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom of Information (FOI) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Working with confidential information |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lobbying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dual-hatted members | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Code of Conduct generally |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal and prejudicial interests | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bullying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

What "Other" topics did parish clerks training cover?

Clerks also attend Parish Clerks Meeting with Assistant Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Member Services Manager.

NALC Session by MO

What methods were employed to give training/support to parish clerks?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> One on one training | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> External speakers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Guidance notes/briefing materials |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards for England's materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Joint authority/regional event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

In general, how well attended was the training for parish clerks?

50-75% of those invited

Does your council have a COMPACT (a formal agreement with your county Association of Local Councils about supporting standards for parish and town councils in the area)?

No

Describe the relationship between your authority and your County Association of Local Councils in relation to standards. For example, how regularly do you interact with them? Are you involved in delivering joint training?

There is an excellent relationship with the County Association of Local Councils and regular interaction. They have organised constitutional training for our Parishes in liaison with ourselves.

Reference to standards in Parish Charter with each Parish Council

Standards for England and Teesside University are currently researching the role of the Parish Liaison Officer. Teesside University have created a brief questionnaire to assess the organisational background, functions and skills needed to carry out the Parish Liaison role. Does your authority have a Parish Liaison Officer?

No - but there is someone who fulfils the same functions

Does the Parish Liaison Officer (or the person who fulfils the same functions) consent for the University of Teesside to contact them to complete a brief questionnaire about their role?

Yes

If yes, please provide contact details (where there are multiple Parish Liaison Officers, just provide one contact):

Name

Gary Martin

Contact address

52 Derby Street, Ormskirk, West Lancs L39 3PB

Contact phone

01695 585065

Email address

gary.martin@westlancs.gov.uk

What steps have you taken when dealing with parishes which have had problems with standards issues? For example, what preventative or capacity building work have you done with parishes?

Training

Assisted with Declarations

Constitutional training and review of standing orders via NALC

Encouraged early appointment of replacement Parish Clerk

Which of the following areas would you like Standards for England to produce additional guidance on to support your work with parishes?

Lobbying

Predetermination and bias

Planning and interests

Dual-hatted members

Other

Please describe what "Other" areas you would like covered.

Parishes and Trusts - how to comply with local government law as well as charity law, particularly where Parish Council is custodian and charity Trustee

Use of flow charts may be helpful

End of form