

Standards Committee

AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Report Title	Standards Committee Away Day - Report on Actions
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Date of Meeting:	17 December 2009
Directorate:	Borough Solicitors and Monitoring Officer
Ward(s)	All

1. Summary

This report summarises the key points from the Standard's Committee away day held on 1st September 2009 and suggests a way forward for the development of Ethics and Standards within the Council.

2. Recommendations

The Committee:

- 2.1 Agrees the list of development activities for the Committee attached at appendix 1.
- 2.2 Instructs the Monitoring Officer to develop a work plan for the Committee, drawing from the points outlined in the appendix 1.

3. Report Background

- 3.1 The Committee held an away day on 1st September in order to develop a work plan that raises the profile of Ethical Conduct and Standards within the Council and externally develops trust and confidence in local democracy.
- 3.2 Members of the Committee considered the role the Committee should play in the Council. Whilst recognising that it did have a statutory role to process and adjudicate complaints against Councillors, the added value role the committee could play went far beyond that in that its role should be to act as guide and support to members and the Council on standards issues and to raise stakeholder perception of local democracy.
- 3.3 An important consideration for Committee members was to engage the political and managerial leadership of the authority in helping the Committee drive its agenda. Consequently, the Council's Chief Executive was invited to deliver the Key note address, together with contributions from Political Group Leaders.

- 3.4 Following speeches from the Leaders, Committee members participated in facilitated activities to develop an ambitious work programme for the year that would have positive outcomes on the perception of the Council by relevant stakeholders and which complemented and supported the Council's improvement agenda. The activities considered the vision, workings and ambitions of the Committee.
- 3.5 The key points from the development day are appended to this report and are presented for approval.
- 3.6 Once formal approval to the work streams has been given, the Monitoring Officer will prepare a work plan which will be formally reported for adoption to the next available Standards Committee meeting, although work streams that can commence immediately will.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Resources and Risk

Some of the activities identified, such as training, diagnostic work will have resource implications although it is not possible to quantify this at this stage.

4.2 Legal

None specifically at this stage.

4.3 Other Implications

None specifically at this stage

5. Background Papers

FJF Away day file

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STANDARDS COMMITTEE

AWAY DAY – 1ST SEPTEMBER 2009

MAIN POINTS

1. Ethical Standards Vision

Development of a vision for the Standards Committee, to cover key areas:

- 1.1 Ethics and Standards at the heart of all decision-making;
- 1.2 Increasing confidence in local democracy;
- 1.3 Effective and efficient internal processes to consider complaints; and
- 1.4 Parishes to be engaged in the agenda.

2. Communication Plan

- 2.1 **Internal** - work with Communications to develop a communications plan that seeks to raise the profile of Ethical Standards within NBC and to engage key stakeholders, including the political and managerial leadership of the Council.
- 2.2 **External** – To engage key external stakeholders and seek to build trust and confidence in local democracy and enhance the reputation of the Council and its members. Relevant communication channels to be developed and used, for example the Intranet.

3. Champions

Each Committee Member to take responsibility for an area within the Committee's terms of reference and to act as a focal point and to champion the area.

4. Terms of Reference

Development of new Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee (for recommendation to the Constitutional Review Working Party and Full Council), to incorporate best practice and legislative changes.

5. Effective Committee Processes

Enhanced Committee processes. Committee Review Processes to be considered (after each Committee). Development of this, possibly through the creation of Review Clinics.

6. **Engagement of Parishes**

Chair and Vice chair, supported by the Monitoring Officer to visit all seven parishes and share information regarding the standards committee.

7. **Personal Development of Standards Committee members.**

Personal development plan (PDP) for each Member of the Standards Committee to be prepared and delivered. This to include competencies wider than standards issues (e.g. negotiation skills; chairing skills etc) and activities to develop team building.

8. **Training**

Seek annual allocation of funds through the Councillor Reference Group. Bid to be developed and put forward

9. **Monitoring**

Review of costs/monitoring reports re complaints – Suite of reports and frequency to be agreed followed by regular reporting to the Standards Committee.

10. **Diagnostic Work**

Diagnostic work on setting a baseline on where the authority is with its ethical agenda. Initial preparation of bespoke questionnaire to identify a baseline followed by the use of specific diagnostic tools such as the Audit Commissions/IDEA's Ethical Standards Audit toolkit.

11. **Governance**

Review the current governance/reporting structure of all committees to encourage even flow of information from committee to committee. Also gain clarity with this review as to what committees should report/give information to the Standards Committee.

12. **Processes**

Review Process/Systems that contribute to problems/frustrations and thereon to potential behavioural problems. Standards Committee Councillors are to meet and identify processes/systems (Example: Current Contact Centre for members. It was felt that this system causes frustration and does not allow members to do their job to the best of their ability which often led to inappropriate behaviours.)