

STANDARDS COMMITTEE**REPORT for meeting to be held on 2 September 2009****Standards and Ethics at Norwich City Council****Purpose**

This report invites the Committee to consider ways in which the Standards Committee could enhance how it interacts with members and officers regarding the promotion of and the upholding of ethical standards in the Council and with the Council's partnerships.

It should be possible that by enhancing the role and involvement of the Standards Committee the Council could maintain or improve its reputation and make a positive difference to public trust. A strong commitment to ethical standards is linked to reputation and success

Risk Assessment, Resource Implications and Legal Implications

There are no resource implications arising directly from the report. Any work related implications will be met from within the existing budget. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Recommendation

That the Committee decides if it wishes the Monitoring Officer to organize a more detailed discussion towards evolving the role of the Council's Standards Committee.

Executive Member: Councillor Alan Waters – Corporate Resources

Ward: All

Contact Officers:

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Background Documents

None - For further information The Regulations can be viewed in full on www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2009/uksi_20091255_en_1

Report

1 Why should the Council's Standards Committee be more involved in the role of championing ethical standards?

1.1 The aim should be that by enhancing the role and involvement of the Standards Committee the Council could maintain or improve its reputation and make a positive difference to public trust. As with scrutiny, a strong commitment to ethical standards is linked to reputation and success.

1.2 Many other local authorities involve their Standards Committees in wider ethical considerations and to consult/advise on matters that could lead to potential solutions regarding Standards. The Committee is also used for consultations on new legislative changes. This offers members an opportunity to have an influence as well as keep up to date with emerging legislative changes and to identify any training requirements for themselves as well as other members, officers and the Council's partners. South Norfolk Council and Broadland District Council are a good example of how this operates in practice with scheduled meetings through out the year.

2. Standards Board for England

2.1 Towards meeting the above aim the Standards Board for England promote the following as best practice:

- Productive joint working between local politicians and officers, supported by a proactive, influential standards committee
- An internal and external communications work programme that promotes the value of ethical standards and the principles of public life
- That high standards of conduct and ethics are central to the objectives, governance and culture of the authority
- That senior local politicians and senior officers are leading work to promote standards
- That the positive approach of the council to high standards is designed and leads to a solid reputation of the authority and the public's understanding of local democracy

3. Expanding the Role of the Standards Committee

3.1 The Standards Committee needs to deal with the standards of conduct of councillors and help those councillors observe the members code of conduct. This should include helping to revise the code of conduct, and arranging training for councillors in how the code works. This proactive approach would add a democratic element.

3.2 Possible areas of involvement for the Standards Committee could be (if not already occurring):

- Consider and recommend, in liaison with the monitoring officer and the council's solicitor, on any ethical aspects of arising/up and coming council business

- Training on and the development of a local code of practice for planning and judicial matters
- Dealing with applications of dispensation on the above
- Training on the general principles (Nolan) and including partners and the ethical framework
- Other various issues for training; impartiality and the promotion of, disclosure of information, bringing of office into disrepute
- Advising and training on decision making eg having regard to any relevant advice provided for example by the chief finance officer and the monitoring officer
- Promotion of best practice in decision making; and promotion of the giving of reasons for decisions (all decisions/all committees)
- Periodic training and promotion of the disclosure of interests and the effect of prejudicial interests on participation
- Registration of member interests (give the Standards Committee a role in making sure this is done on a regular basis and in timely fashion)
- Any relevant consultations