



STANDARDS COMMITTEE

PROGRESS REPORT – ACTION PLAN FOR PROMOTING / ACHIEVING

HIGH ETHICAL STANDARDS

February 2008

1. Background

The ethical governance audit in 2006 led to an action plan being drawn up. This report updates the Committee on continuing progress in delivering the actions. We will shortly be carrying out a new ethical governance audit which in turn will generate a new action plan.

2. Summary of Progress

a. Overall position

Excellent progress is being made against the action plan.

Overall the Council has an excellent standards regime in place. This is evidenced by the results of the recent Use of Resources assessment. The overall score for the Council was 4/4. The Council also scored 4/4 for the module relating to standards work. Indeed our work in the field of ethical governance is considered to be an area of notable practice.

To quote from the actual Assessment:-“The Council has demonstrated that it has robust arrangements in place to promote and ensure probity and propriety with high ethical standards being one of the objectives included in the corporate plan.”

b. Areas of significant progress/achievement

- A new Code of Conduct for Members was adopted by this Council in May 2007
- Training on the new Code was provided in 2007 for Members(Borough/Town/Parish Councils) and relevant Officers
- Annual report from Standards Committee submitted to Full Council in January 2008
- Induction training provided to new Members with positive feedback from Members
- Effective Standards area established on Connect (the Council's intranet system) and *Members Online*
- Effective liaison with clerks of Town and Parish Councils
- Prompt, effective advice has been given to Members on ethical issues
- More Corporate governance training is planned for both Members and Officers

c. Areas for action

- Plain English guide to the Constitution needs to be completed
- Advice to contractors and suppliers on Standards/Ethics needs to be updated

PROMOTING / ACHIEVING HIGH ETHICAL STANDARDS

OBJECTIVE	KEY ACTION	TARGET / PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	LEAD	POSITION AS 06 FEBRUARY 2008
<p>1. To continue to raise awareness of members / officers, partners and the public of the Codes of Conduct, the role of Standards Committee, and the wider ethical framework and to promote high standards of conduct.</p>	<p>1.1 Include relevant information in members' induction pack on the Code and Conduct and Protocols etc.</p>	<p>Induction Pack included relevant information by 1st May 2007.</p>	<p>CD (P & G)</p>	<p>Briefing notes were indeed included in packs for successful candidates in May 2007 elections.</p>
	<p>1.2 Monitoring Officer to hold one-to-one awareness raising session with every member elected in a By-Election.</p>	<p>Effective one to one awareness raising sessions held with all new members within 2 months of election.</p>	<p>CD (P & G)</p>	<p>No by-elections since Council elections in May 2007.</p>
	<p>1.3 Include regular items in <i>Member News</i> on ethical issues.</p>	<p>At least six effective articles per year in <i>Member News</i>.</p>	<p>LSM</p>	<p>Several items have indeed been included in <i>Member News</i>; several more are planned. Members will be advised appropriately of the new local referral arrangements.</p>
	<p>1.4 Review and update the information in the Employee Induction Pack on ethical issues.</p>	<p>Employees indication pack includes updated information by 30th April 2007.</p>	<p>LSM</p>	<p>The new Induction process includes a section on Standards in the Employee Welcome Handbook, and is covered in the Personnel Induction checklist / initial briefing.</p>
	<p>1.5 Include regular items on ethical issues in Insight / CMT core brief.</p>	<p>At least 4 articles per year in Insight / CMT Core Brief.</p>	<p>LSM</p>	<p>Articles/items have indeed appeared. More are planned to advise on the new local referral arrangements.</p>
	<p>1.6 Establish an effective Standards / Ethics area on Connect and <i>Members Online</i>, which is kept up to date.</p>	<p>Standards / Ethics area in place by 28th February 2007 and always up to date.</p>	<p>LSM</p>	<p>The Standards Area on both Connect and <i>Members Online</i> has indeed been established and updated on several occasions. It is being updated further to reflect the new Standards arrangements.</p>
	<p>1.7 Establish an effective Standards / Ethics area on the web-site which is kept up to date.</p>	<p>Standards / Ethics area in place by 28th February 2007 and always up to date.</p>	<p>LSM</p>	<p>Achieved in January 2007 – similar updates to preceding paragraph will be made.</p>

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	1.8 Review the information on Standards / Ethics in information provided to contractors / suppliers and in the Procurement Code.	Review completed by 30 th April 2007 and always up to date.	P & PM	The information contained in the Procurement Code has indeed been reviewed and updated. The information to be provided to contractors will be updated by 1 st of May 2008
	1.9 Include regular articles in Forward on ethical issues.	At least two effective articles per year included in Forward.	LSM	An article appeared in the Summer Edition of Forward to announce the new Code of Conduct for Members. A further item is planned for the next edition to advise on the new Standards regime.
2. To ensure that the members' / officers' training and development needs in relation to achieving high ethical standards are identified and met.	2.1 Work with Member Champions and the Standards Committee to ensure that members' training and development needs are identified.	Needs assessment completed by 31 st March 2007.	HPOD/ DSM/ LSM	Further Corporate Governance training for members has been identified in the recent skills audit. Further discussions on the training requirements for members will be discussed at the Standards Committee on the 6 th of February.
	2.2 Deliver effective Member Induction after the May 2007 elections.	Member feedback	CD (P & G)/ LSM	This was achieved. Member feedback was positive.
	2.3 Include relevant member training and development needs in annual corporate training and development plan and implement plan.	Agreed training and development undertaken effectively within agreed timescales.	HPOD	Appropriate training is included in the 2007 / 08 Corporate Training and Development Programme and this has been provided.
	2.4 Include relevant employee training and development in annual corporate training and development plan and implement plan.	Agreed training and development undertaken effectively within agreed timescales.	HPOD/LSM	Appropriate training included in the 2007 / 08 Corporate Training and Development Programme. Some training has been provided and more is scheduled.

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<p>3. To ensure effective procedures for seeking advice and reporting concerns on ethical issues and that any matters arising are dealt with effectively.</p>	<p>3.1 Review the existing procedures and implement the outcomes.</p>	<p>Effective review completed within 2 months of the receipt of the Government's revised Code of Conduct.</p>	<p>LSM</p>	<p>The appropriate time for an extensive review to take place is when Regulations have been published in respect of the new local referral arrangements. A draft consultation document on the proposed regulations will be considered by Standards Committee on the 6 February 2008.</p>
	<p>3.2 Ensure that prompt, effective advice is provided to members on ethical issues.</p>	<p>Member Feedback e.g. in the annual member survey.</p>	<p>CD (P & G)/ LSM</p>	<p>2006 Member Survey indicated generally good and rising scores. No adverse feedback identified. 2008 survey will contain express question on the provision of advice.</p>
	<p>3.3 Ensure that any referrals from the SBE are dealt with effectively.</p>	<p>Positive SBE feedback for any cases referred.</p>	<p>CD (P & G)</p>	<p>No referrals received since the action plan was agreed.</p>
<p>4. To monitor the operation of the Codes of Conduct and wider ethical issues to ensure the highest possible standards</p>	<p>4.1 Undertake bi-annual ethical governance audits and produce a report on the findings.</p>	<p>Next Audit due to be completed by Spring 2008.</p>	<p>LSM</p>	<p>The audit is currently being planned.</p>
	<p>4.2 Submit an Annual Report from the Standards Committee to full Council on ethical standards in the authority.</p>	<p>Effective report submitted to Council in January each year.</p>	<p>LSM</p>	<p>Achieved in January 2008.</p>
	<p>4.3 Update the member Code of Conduct once the Government's revised model Code is received.</p>	<p>New Code adopted by full Council at first meeting after receipt of revised model Code.</p>	<p>LSM</p>	<p>Achieved in May 2007.</p>
	<p>4.4 Update the officer Code of Conduct once the Government's statutory Code is received.</p>	<p>New Code agreed within 3 months of the receipt of statutory Code.</p>	<p>LSM</p>	<p>No Statutory Code yet issued, nor any Government timeframe for publication announced.</p>

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5. To implement the other outcomes of the ethical governance audit effectively.	5.1 Review the approach to the Council's forward plan.	Effective review completed by 30 th April 2007.	DSM	As part of the introduction of the new committee management system E-GENDA a review of our general approach has been completed and new arrangements are in place.
	5.2 Produce Plan English summary of the Council's Constitution.	Guide published by 1 st April 2007.	DSM	Work will shortly be completed on the preparation of the Guide.
	5.3 Increase liaison with Clerks of Town / Parish Councils on ethical issues.	Feedback from Clerks.	DSM	The proposed Joint training on the New Code of Conduct took place in 2007. Positive feedback has been received on the support provided to town/Parish Clerks by the Democratic Services team.

KEY:

CD (P & G)	=	Corporate Director (Policy and Governance)
HPOD	=	Head of Policy and Organisational Development
DSM	=	Democratic Services Manager
LSM	=	Legal Services Manager
P & PM	=	Procurement and Partnerships Manager
SBE	=	Standards Board for England