

Committee: STANDARDS

Agenda Item

Date: June 22, 2009

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Title: WORK PROGRAMME

Author: Michael Perry, Assistant Chief Executive,
01799 510416

Item for decision

Summary

1. This report draws members' attention to examples of best practice and other ideas drawn by the Standards Board for England from entries for the LGC Award for Standards.

Recommendations

2. In the light of the report on this agenda regarding the Annual Return and the contents of this report, members determine a work programme for the Committee.

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report:

Standards Board website:

<http://www.standardsboard.gov.uk/resources/Standardsandethicsaward/GoodpracticeThestandardsandethicsaward/>

Impact

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	None.
Community Safety	None.
Equalities	None.
Finance	None.
Human Rights	None.
Legal implications	None.
Sustainability	None.
Ward-specific impacts	None.

Workforce/Workplace	None.
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Situation

5. In 2009, the first time the Local Government Chronicle made an award for standards and ethics supported by the Standards Board for England, six authorities were short listed and the Standards Board have drawn examples of good practice and other ideas which it has published on its website. These can be summarised as follows:

6. Engaging Leadership

- The Standards Committee monitor current policies and proactively seek to influence and develop new policies high ethical standards and good governance (Rossendale BC).
- The Standards Committee produces an annual report which is reported to Full Council. The Standards Committee also has a forward work plan which is kept under review by officers with reference to national developments (Leeds CC).
- Lead Officers have been appointed to act as governance champions to promote high standards and advise on issues such as contract procedures, gifts and hospitality and whistle blowing (Rossendale CC).

7. Training Skills for Members

- Focus member development and working with the IDeA on a learning programme. All councillors have a personal development plan (Rossendale BC).
- Media and presentation training for members.
- Training formats tailored to the needs of members with E-Learning courses. Standards Committee review decisions of the Adjudication Panel for England and consider any lessons the Council could learn (Leeds CC).
- IDeA online training assistance provided to all parish councillors (Leeds CC)
- At each meeting of the Standards Committee members consider a real life case study of standards issues from another authority to discuss what can be learnt from the situation that applied locally (Rossendale BC).
- Councillors serving on development control and licensing must receive training before taking up their positions so they are aware of

protocols, policies and regulations governing these meetings (Rossendale BC).

- A recruitment pack has been developed for the appointment of independent members containing a job description, a person specification, advertisement and guidance on legislative requirements (Newark & Sherwood DC).

8. Communicating with Staff and Stakeholders

- Publication of an internal newsletter promoting ethical and corporate governance issues and detailing the work of the Standards Committee (Leeds CC).
- Adoption of a slogan to help engage staff (Serious about Standards – Rossendale BC).
- Events to engage members and council officers and keep them up to date with what the authority is doing to maintain higher standards e.g. clerk forums which are regular meetings between council officers and town and parish clerks.
- Use of the internal staff information bulletin to draw staff attention to the Code of Conduct for members and the work of the Committee (Newcastle CC).
- Use of various ethics statements in publicity and in engagement with the public and other stakeholders.
- Standards issues reinforced through the corporate team briefing in the staff newsletter and through specific information booklets on whistle blowing and their gifts and hospitality policy (Rossendale BC).

9. Increasing Confidence in Democracy

- Changes to the complaints system was promoted through the residents' newsletter including an article written by the Standards Committee Chairman to promoted the role of the Standards Committee (Newcastle CC).
- The Standards Committee has communications plan covering members, parishes and the public (Leeds CC).
- The role of the Standards Committee is promoted to the local media and in the community newsletter (Newark & Sherwood DC).
- Holding an 'I'm a councillor get me out of here' event aimed at getting young people and councillors talking. This involved a number of schools in the area (Colchester BC).

- Local Democracy Week aimed at helping young people understand more about their council and local democracy (Rossendale BC).
- Production of a standards bulletin on the council's website so local people and partners can be assured of the correct conduct of the Council (Rossendale BC).
- Live webcasts of council meetings with an on site archive (Lincolnshire CC).

10. Working in Partnerships with Other Authorities

- Advising another borough council on protocols and work for the Standards Committee (Rossendale BC).
- Providing best practice advice and support to other authorities via a standards forum, monitoring officer groups and the organisation of an annual monitoring officers' conference (Newark & Sherwood DC).
- Proposal for a joint standards committee with other councils to increase capacity and make it easier to avoid conflicts of interest (Rossendale BC).
- A flow chart to assist with training for councillors (Ceredigion CC)
- Standards committee maintaining close relationship with the corporate governance and audit committee (the equivalent of our Performance Select Committee) and sending a progress report every six months (Leeds CC).
- Preparation and circulation of the parish council toolkit (Nottinghamshire Monitoring Officers' Group)

Risk Analysis

15. There are no risks associated with this report but there may be opportunities to be developed to enhance the role and profile of the Standards Committee.