

Committee: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Agenda Item

Date: November 23, 2009

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Title: SATISFACTION FEEDBACK
QUESTIONNAIRES

Author: Michael Perry, Assistant Chief Executive,
01799 510416

Item for decision

Summary

1. This report is to seek members' views as to whether it would be appropriate to seek feedback as to the performance of officers and the committee from those making allegations of a breach of the Code of Conduct and the members who are subject of such allegations.

Recommendations

2. That members agree in principle that satisfaction questionnaires be issued to complainants and subject members at the conclusion of an investigation.
3. Members determine the form of the questionnaire.

Background Papers

4. None.

Impact

- 5.

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

Situation

Author: Michael Perry
Version date: 26 October 2009

6. As part of its work programme for the current year, this committee agreed to consider whether it would be desirable to use satisfaction questionnaires in connection with the performance of the committee and officers.
7. Satisfaction surveys are currently in use in other parts of the council. For example, Environmental Health carry out satisfaction surveys in respect of premises its visits in connection with its regulatory functions. The Licensing Team do likewise. Building Surveying issue its customers with satisfaction questionnaires on the completion of each inspection.
8. In my report to this committee on 22 June I commented on examples of best practice drawn from the short listed candidates for the Local Government Chronicle annual awards for standards. Interestingly, none of the authorities concerned appear to have adopted satisfaction questionnaires.
9. Satisfaction questionnaires can prove a useful source of information in gauging performance of the committee and officers. An analysis of the information gathered may lead to improvements in performance.
10. Clearly standards investigations are emotive issues. The complainant feels sufficiently aggrieved regarding the conduct of a councillor to have made a complaint. The councillor on the other hand will frequently be affronted that a complaint has been made and will consider that he or she has done nothing wrong. Dissatisfaction on the part of the subject member may be heightened by the fact that as Monitoring Officer I have no power to inform the subject member of any details of the complaint against him. That can only be done by the Standards Sub-Committee after it has assessed the complaint. I may inform members that a complaint has been made but cannot give details of the nature of the complaint although I may indicate which sections of the Code of Conduct may be engaged. Prior to the transfer of responsibility for vetting complaints to the Standards Committee the Standards Board would not inform a member a complaint had been made until after it had been decided whether or not to refer the matter for investigation. Members who were the subject of complaints to the Standards Board, even where the complaints were not passed for investigation, were frequently aggrieved by this practice. On the other hand I have found that telling members that a complaint has been made without giving them details of the complaint causes equal outrage. It is therefore necessary if satisfaction surveys are to be used that the questions should be carefully structured to try and ensure that the information gathered is as objective as possible.
11. Attached are two draft satisfaction questionnaires. Whilst largely the same there are some differences to reflect the fact that the complainant and the subject member will be approaching the investigation and hearing process from different viewpoints.

Risk Analysis

11. There are no risks associated with this report although there are opportunities which may be exploited if suitable satisfaction questionnaires are used.

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL - STANDARDS

SATISFACTION SURVEY (COMPLAINANTS)

The Council wants to ensure that allegations of a breach of the Code of Conduct are dealt with appropriately and would therefore ask that you take a moment to give us your opinion about the approach of the Council and the quality of the service that you received.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable
I felt the guidance notes on how to make a complaint were clear.						
I felt the form for making a complaint was helpful.						
I felt my complaint was acknowledged promptly.						
I felt the complaint was vetted by the Standards Sub-Committee within a reasonable time.						
I felt the reconsideration of my complaint was dealt with by the Standards Sub-Committee within a reasonable time.						
I found the reasons for the Standards Sub-Committee's decision(s) easy to understand.						
I found the investigating officer to be courteous and respectful.						
I felt that the investigating officer's report was produced within a reasonable time.						
I felt that the investigating officer's report was clear and						

easy to understand.						
The hearing was held within 3 months of the date of the investigating officer's final report						
I felt the decision notice was clear and easy to understand.						
Based on the service received I would be confident in making a complaint about a breach of the Code of Conduct should the need arise in the future.						

We would be interested in any further comments or suggestions you may wish to make about the quality of our service or any of your responses given above.

Name.....
Address.....
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If you require this form in an alternative format and/or language please contact us on 01799 510510.

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL - STANDARDS

SATISFACTION SURVEY (SUBJECT MEMBERS)

The Council wants to ensure that allegations of a breach of the Code of Conduct are dealt with appropriately and would therefore ask that you take a moment to give us your opinion about the approach of the Council and the quality of the service that you received.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable
I felt I was informed that a complaint had been made promptly.						
I felt the complaint was vetted by the Standards Sub-Committee within a reasonable time.						
I felt the reconsideration of the complaint was dealt with by the Standards Sub-Committee within a reasonable time.						
I found the reasons for the Standards Sub-Committee's decision(s) easy to understand.						
I found the investigating officer to be courteous and respectful.						
I felt that the investigating officer's report was produced within a reasonable time.						
I felt that the investigating officer's report was clear and easy to understand.						
The hearing was held within 3 months of the date of the investigating						

officer's final report						
I felt the decision notice was clear and easy to understand.						
I felt that the appeal procedure was explained clearly.						
I felt that I was dealt with fairly throughout.						

We would be interested in any further comments or suggestions you may wish to make about the quality of our service or any of your responses given above.

Name.....

Address.....

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