

# Ethical Framework Update

Standards Committee

Date: 23 July 2007

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**Author:** Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)

**Wards Affected:** All

## Purpose

- To provide an update on various matters related to the Ethical Framework.

## Recommendation

- That the Ethical Framework update be noted.
- That the Committee approve the Media Guidelines for Members attached at Appendix 3 and they be incorporated in the Constitution.

## 1. Reasons

- 1.1 To keep the Standards Committee informed of issues of probity in the Council.

## 2. Detail

### *Local Filter Pilot Workshop*

- 2.1 On 11<sup>th</sup> July 2007 a Local Filter Pilot Workshop was held to consider a set of cases sent by the Standards Board for England to participants in the Pilot. The intention was to give feedback to the Standards Board for England as to how a local filter system could work and to enable members of the Committee to shape the national development of the Local Filter Process. It also gave valuable experience to Standards Committee members in operating the likely local filter process. Thanks are extended to those members who participated in the workshop.
- 2.2 The exercise went very well and feedback will be provided to the Standards Board. The Monitoring Officer will report to the Committee on the outcome of the pilot in due course.

### *Ethical Audit*

- 2.3 At the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2007 the Committee approved a revised Ethical Desktop Audit and identified key areas for action and review. Attached at Appendix '1' is a copy of the Ethical Audit Matrix, updated to show the progress against the actions agreed.

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## *Learning and Development Update*

- 2.4 As part of the Ethical Audit the importance of training for Councillors and co-opted members was recognised. Attached at Appendix '2' is a summary of the training undertaken by Members since the beginning of the municipal year.

## *Revision of Media Guidelines*

- 2.5 In October, the Committee agreed for a consultation to take place on the revised Media Guidelines for Members, which form part of the Constitution and of the Communications Strategy.
- 2.6 Following consultation with the Group Leaders, and discussions about the principles of media relations with the Cabinet and Labour Group, the Head of Communications has revised the Media Guidelines and these are attached at Appendix '3' for the Committee's final approval.

## *Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire Independent Standards Committee Members' Forum*

- 2.7 A meeting of the Forum took place at Newbury on 20th April 2007. . Attached at Appendix '4' are a copy of the notes of the meeting and a copy of the slides used by the Standards Board for England in their presentation to the meeting. Mr Trevor Davis attended and will report further on any key issues that were discussed.
- 2.8 The next meeting of the Forum is scheduled for 11 am on Friday 19th October and will be hosted by Wokingham.

## *Standards Board Publications*

- 2.9 Attached at Appendix '5' and '6' are the Standards Board Bulletins for May 2007 (Issue 33) and July 2007 (Issue 34) which include:

### Issue 33:

- a summary of the major changes to the new Code of Conduct.
- details on adopting and amending the new Code of Conduct, and special advice for parish and town councils.
- an update on local investigations.

### Issue 34:

- common queries about the revised Code of Conduct.
- a look at paragraph 4(a) of the Code and the disclosure of confidential information.
- an exploration of findings of no further action.

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Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Stephen Taylor on Direct Dial on 01793 463012 or Email [staylor@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:staylor@swindon.gov.uk).

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## *Standards Board Roadshow*

- 2.10 Trevor Davies and Mike Compton attend the recent Standards Board Roadshow held in Swindon which focused on the New Model Code of Conduct for Members and on other issues, such as bias and pre-determination. They will report any further information at the meeting.

## *Annual Standards Board Conference*

- 2.11 The next Annual Standards Board Conference in Birmingham will be held on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> October 2007, and will be entitled: 'Down to Detail' and will focus on putting local regulation and the new Code of Conduct into action. Members are asked to advise the Monitoring Officer if they wish to attend the conference as soon as possible.

## **Alternative Options**

- None

## **Risk Management**

### *Financial and Procurement Implications*

- None

### *Legal / Human Rights Implications*

- None

### *Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)*

- Monitoring of issues of probity in the Council underpins the Council's plans and policies and to the delivery of the 2010 objectives.

## **Consultees**

- The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.
- Chief Executive
- Group Director, Resources
- Head of Communications
- Head of Internal Audit

## **Background Papers and Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Updated Ethical Audit Matrix
- Appendix 2 – Learning and Development Update
- Appendix 3 - Revised Media Guidelines
- Appendix 4 – Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire Independent Standards Committee Members' Forum – Notes and Presentation Slides – 20th April 2007
- Appendix 5 – Standards Board Bulletin for May 2007 (Issue 33)
- Appendix 6 – Standards Board Bulletin for July 2007 (Issue 34)

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