

## Standards Committee Update

COUNCIL

Date: 22 April 2010

### Purpose

- To receive a report on the work of the Committee in the period 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.

### Recommendation

- To note the proceedings of the Standards Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

#### 1. Standards Committee Meeting– 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010

##### a) Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

##### b) Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Whistleblowing Policy

The Committee received a report advising that the current Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Whistleblowing Policy and Fraud Response Plan were being reviewed, and the Committee made comments on the documents to be taken into account as part of the consultation. It was agreed that the results of the consultation be brought back to a future meeting, for the Committee to approve the final Strategy and Policy. The Committee also asked to receive a report on the operation of the Whistleblowing Policy during the year.

##### c) Standards for England Training DVD – Assessment Made Clear

The Committee deferred watching the training DVD. Instead they asked that the the Director of Law and Democratic Services arrange a dedicated training session in May or June 2010, following Annual Council, for the Committee to view the training DVD and discuss a Standards for England Case Study.

##### d) Ethical Framework Update

The Committee received an update on various matters relating to the Ethical Framework including:

- *Outcome of consultation and review of Codes and Protocols* – The Committee adopted the Monitoring Officer Protocol and Media Guidelines unchanged and adopted the Protocol for Member / Officer Relations and Councillor Role Definitions as amended, subject to the new Councillor Role Definitions for Chair and Members of the Planning Committee being referred to the Planning Committee for comment and being brought back to the next Committee for final approval.
- *Members Code of Conduct* – The Committee noted the delay in the outcome of the national review of Members Code of Conduct.
- *Standards Masterclass Action Plan* – The Committee endorsed the Action Plan and welcomed the progress against the targets and asked that the Director of Law and Democratic Services to report back on progress at 6 monthly intervals.

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- *Connecting People Connecting Places* – The Committee noted that no formal governance arrangements were currently required.
  - *Membership of the Standards Committee* – a) The Committee noted that the Monitoring Officer would be advertising for an independent member to take up position from May 2010, and affirmed its view that Independent Members could apply to serve more than two four years terms on the Committee, following a public advertisement of the position and interview if they wished to do so, b) The Committee recommended to Council that the membership of the Standards Committee be increased to include an additional Parish Council representative (from two to three representatives) in line with Standards for England recommended best practice, to be nominated by the Swindon Area Committee of the Wiltshire Association of Parish Councils, and to sit on the Standards Committee from May 2010.
  - *Notable Practice* - Research into notable practice within ten Local Authority Standards Committee entitled 'Assessing the Impact of Standards Committee' research outcomes was noted.
  - *Parish Council Training* – The Committee received an update on Ethical Training undertaken by Parish Councils, and asked that the Monitoring Officer follow up with specific Parish Councils where less than half had attended training, and to establish the nature of training carried out by the Parish Councils themselves.
  - *Reminders* – It was noted that reminders had been sent to members and staff to register gifts and hospitality and update registers of interests.
  - *Standards for England Bulletin Issue 46* – The contents were noted.
- e) Case Study  
The Committee explored an Appeals Tribunal decision from the Adjudication Panel for England made on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009, regarding a case concerning Councillor Marc Cranfield-Adams of London Borough Richmond upon Thames, and how they would have approached this case. The Committee noted the outcome of the case following their discussion.
- f) Ethical Framework Compliance Update  
The Committee noted an exempt report (under Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972) concerning the progress and outcome of various ethical framework compliance matters, including current whistleblowing, Code of Conduct Complaints and Member / Officer Protocol complaints.

### Background Papers and Information

- Standards Committee Reports and the related Minutes are available in full on the Committee and Member Information Pages of the Council's Intranet and Website ([www.swindon.gov.uk](http://www.swindon.gov.uk)) or on request from Committee and Member Services.