



Epping Forest District Council

STANDARDS COMMITTEE Tuesday, 13th April, 2010

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping
Room: Committee Room 1
Time: 7.30 pm
Committee Secretary: G Lunnun - The Office of the Chief Executive
Tel: 01992 564244 Email: glunnun@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Members:

Ms M Marshall (Chairman), Councillor B Rolfe, Councillor Mrs P Smith, G Weltch, M Wright and Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse

Parish/Town Council Deputy Representative(s):

Councillors Mrs D Borton, J Salter and B Surtees

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2010 (attached).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

4. STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND - ANNUAL RETURN 2009/10 (Pages 9 - 38)

Recommendation:

To consider the Annual Return for 2009/10 to be made to Standards for England.

(Monitoring Officer) Attached are the questions which form the return for 2010 together with some guidance notes issued by Standards for England.

The Return has to be submitted on-line by 16 April 2010. The attached preview of the questions shows the Annual Return in its entirety. Not all of the questions may apply to this Council and only those applicable will be displayed on the on-line

The approach of Standards for England to the Return has changed from previous years. A "tick box" questionnaire is to be used resulting in less open questions, although most questions have an option for "other" which, when ticked, will open up a free text box to type in.

5. ALLEGATIONS MADE ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF DISTRICT AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILLORS (Pages 39 - 42)

(Monitoring Officer) To consider the attached schedule showing the current position.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

(Monitoring Officer) The calendar for 2010/11 provides for meetings of the Committee on 13 July 2010, 12 October 2010, 18 January 2011 and 19 April 2011.

Additional meetings can be arranged as and when required by the Committee.

7. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

To consider whether, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press should be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on grounds that they will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act indicated:

Agenda Item No	Subject	Exempt Information Paragraph Number
8	Local Assessment Cases 1A and 5/2009	1
9	Standards for England Direction	1

To resolve that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items which are confidential under Section 100(A)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972:

Agenda Item No	Subject
Nil	Nil

Paragraph 9 of the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution require:

- (1) All business of the Council requiring to be transacted in the presence of the press and public to be completed by 10.00 p.m. at the latest.
- (2) At the time appointed under (1) above, the Chairman shall permit the completion of debate on any item still under consideration, and at his or her discretion, any other remaining business whereupon the Council shall proceed to exclude the public and press.
- (3) Any public business remaining to be dealt with shall be deferred until after the completion of the private part of the meeting, including items submitted for report rather than decision.

Background Papers: Paragraph 8 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution define background papers as being documents relating to the subject matter of the report which in the Proper Officer's opinion:

- (a) disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based; and
- (b) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report does not include published works or those which disclose exempt or confidential information (as defined in Rule 10) and in respect of executive reports, the advice of any political advisor.

Inspection of background papers may be arranged by contacting the officer responsible for the item.

8. LOCAL ASSESSMENT CASES 1A AND 5/2009

(Monitoring Officer) To discuss issues arising from the Hearings Sub-Committee meeting held on 1 March 2010.

9. STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND DIRECTION

(Monitoring Officer) To consider an oral report on progress being made in relation to the Direction.

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EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Standards Committee **Date:** 26 January 2010

Place: Committee Room 2, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 8.48 pm

Members Present: Ms M Marshall (Independent Member) (Chairman), G Weltch (Independent Member), M Wright (Independent Member), Councillor Mrs P Smith (EFDC Appointee), Councillor B Rolfe (EFDC Appointee), Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse (EFDC Appointee), Councillor Mrs D Borton (Parish or Town Council Representative), Councillor J Salter (Parish or Town Council Representative) and Councillor B Surtees (Parish or Town Council Representative)

Other Councillors:

Apologies:

Officers Present: C O'Boyle (Monitoring Officer), I Willett (Deputy Monitoring Officer), G Lunnun (Allegations Determination Manager) and S G Hill (Local Assessments Manager)

11. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2009 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made pursuant to the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

13. LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS

The Committee viewed a Standards for England DVD designed to help standards committee members and local authority officers involved in the assessment of complaints.

14. INFORMAL MEETING OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE - 13 OCTOBER 2009

The Committee received the notes of an informal meeting of members of the Committee held on 13 October 2009 together with revised criteria for the local assessment of complaints arising out of that meeting.

Members noted that following the discussion on the Committee's budget for 2009/10 a virement of £5,000 had been made to cover the anticipated overspending due to the work required in relation to local assessment. Arrangements had also been

made for the 2010/11 budget to be increased by that amount and for consideration to be given to the budget being increased in future years if necessary.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the notes of the meeting held on 13 October 2009 be taken as read and agreed as a correct record; and
- (2) That the revised Local Assessment of Complaints – Criteria be approved.

15. PREDISPOSITION, PREDETERMINATION OR BIAS, AND THE CODE

The Committee received updated Standards for England guidance on predisposition, predetermination or bias and the Code of Conduct following a session held at the Annual Assembly in October 2009.

Members noted that the guidance indicated that it was not a problem for councillors to be predisposed to a particular view. The guidance continued that predisposition could be strong and could be publicly voiced. However, a councillor had to be open to the possibility that, however unlikely, they would hear arguments during a debate about the issue that would change their mind about how they intended to vote. As long as they were willing to keep an open mind about the issue they were entitled to take part in any vote on the matter.

Members also noted that the guidance stated that by and large predetermination would not amount to a personal or prejudicial interest. As a result there was no specific requirement to declare an interest and leave the meeting under paragraphs 8 to 10 of the Code. However members could find themselves the subject of a complaint under paragraph 5 of the Code on disrepute.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer indicated that he would take this revised guidance into account in relation to the revisions currently being made to the Planning Protocol.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Standards for England revised guidance on predisposition, predetermination or bias and the Code of Conduct be noted; and
- (2) That the revised guidance be taken into account in relation to the revisions currently being made to the Planning Protocol.

16. LOCAL ASSESSMENT - EXPERIENCES OF THE PROCESS

The Committee received a note of a Standards for England summary of discussions which had taken place at the Annual Assembly in October 2009 about experiences of the local assessment process since its introduction in May 2008.

17. ALLEGATIONS MADE ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF DISTRICT AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILLORS

The Committee received a schedule regarding current allegations made about the conduct of District and Parish/Town Councillors.

Members noted that since the preparation of the schedule, cases 6/2009 and 13/2009 had been referred to a Hearings Sub-Committee. Cases 14/2009 and

16/2009 were the subject of a direction to the Monitoring Officer. No review had been requested in relation to case 15/2009 and that case was now closed. Cases 17/2009 and 18/2009 had been referred for investigation by the Deputy Monitoring Officer and an external investigating officer respectively.

18. PLANNING PROTOCOL - REVIEW

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that he was continuing to work on a revised protocol. It had been his intention to delay submission of the revised document to the Committee until publication by the Government of a new Members' Code of Conduct. However, if the new Code was not issued in the new future the revised protocol would be submitted to the Committee and might have to be further amended in the light of a new code.

Members noted that the Monitoring Officer and the Deputy Monitoring Officer would be attending a course on 10 February 2010 regarding implementation of new member and officer codes of conduct.

19. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that the calendar for 2009/10 provided for another meeting of the Committee on 13 April 2010.

Members also noted that the draft calendar for 2010/11 provided for meetings of the Committee on 13 July 2010, 12 October 2010, 18 July 2011 and 19 April 2011.

20. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Ms M Marshall gave notice that she proposed to resign as an independent member of the Committee at the end of her current three year term in May 2010.

The officers outlined the steps which would need to be taken to fill the vacancy.

CHAIRMAN

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Annual Return 2010

This document is a list of the questions you will be asked in our 2010 Annual Return. The Annual Return will be an online form, accessible via our website. When we launch the online version you will be able to use the same login details that you use when accessing the quarterly return.

We have provided you with the questions early so that you can prepare in advance of the submission window, which will be either late March or early April 2010. An announcement containing the exact details of this will be made at a later date.

This will hopefully give you the opportunity to discuss the questions with your standards committee and other parties as necessary.

For those of you who completed last year's annual return, you will notice that only a handful of the questions are the same. We have made some significant changes to enable us to gather new information about how the local standards framework is functioning. There are 5 sections this year, communication, influence, training and support, investigations and a section only for authorities with parishes.

As with last year, the information you give us will feed into our Annual Review and we will be looking for items of notable practice to share with the standards community. We will once again be sharing your responses with the Audit Commission, to help inform their organisational "Use of Resources, Key Line of Enquiry" assessment.

When considering the questions, please refer to the guidance notes, as they will give you more details about the question and how to answer it.

If you are unsure about anything in this document, please contact our monitoring team on 0161 817 5300 or by emailing authorityreturns@standardsforengland.gov.uk.

PART 1: COMMUNICATION

The main roles of a standards committee are:

- to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members
- to assist members in observing the Code of Conduct.

Your responses to this section will help us to collect examples of the different ways that standards committees communicate messages about ethical standards, both within the authority and to the wider public.

Annual Report

1) Does the standards committee produce an annual report?

YES/NO. If yes go to q2. If no go to q4

2) What does the report contain?

- A personal statement by the standards committee chairman
- Information about the members of the standards committee
- The role of the standards committee
- The standards committee terms of reference
- Information about the Code of Conduct
- Statistical information about complaints that have been received
- Information about the length of time taken dealing with complaints
- A summary of complaints which have led to investigation, sanction or other action
- Details about training/events provided
- The forward work plan of the standards committee
- Other (*You will be asked for more details if selected*)

3) How is the standards committee annual report circulated?

Note: If your return is not on the website please forward a copy to us. See the guidance notes for details.

- Sent to all senior officers
- Sent to all members
- Sent to parish/town councils (This is only displayed if your authority is applicable)
- Available on the authority intranet
- Available as a specific item on the authority website (You will be asked for the website address if selected)
- Available in the standards committee papers published on the authority website (You will be asked for the website address if selected)
- Included as a full authority meeting agenda item
- Publicised in local newspaper / press release
- Distributed to households
- Available at authority offices
- Not circulated outside of the standards committee
- Other (You will be asked for more details if selected)

Publicising Complaints

4) How can the public access information about how to make a complaint against a member?

- Through a 'compliments and complaints' type section of the council website (You will be asked for the website address if selected)
- Through the standards committee section of the website (You will be asked for the website address if selected)
- Complaints leaflets available from the authority
- Included as part of a council newsletter
- Advertised through parish councils
- Information is not available to the public
- Other (You will be asked for more details if selected)

5) How can the public access information about the outcome of initial assessment decisions?

- Written summary available for public inspection
- Press release issued for all initial assessment decisions
- Press release issued only if the subject member agrees
- Assessment decisions published on the authority website
- Articles published in the authority newsletter
- Other (You will be asked for more details if selected)

6) How can the public access information about the outcome of investigations?

- Hearings are open to the public
- Press release issued for all investigation outcomes
- Press release issued only if the subject member agrees
- Published on the authority website
- Decision notices are available for public inspection
- Articles in the authority newsletter
- Other (You will be asked for more details if selected)

7) Do you have a mechanism in place for measuring the satisfaction of all those involved in allegations of misconduct? For example the member, complainant and witnesses.

YES/NO. If yes go to q8. If no go to q9

8) If yes, please can you describe the process?

Open question

Communicating the role and work of the standards committee and standards generally

9) What does the authority do to promote the work of the standards committee and standards generally to the rest of the authority (i.e. internally)?

- Dedicated standards committee pages on intranet
- Standards committee has its own newsletter / bulletin
- Standards committee issues briefing notes
- Articles in employee newsletter / bulletin
- Standards committee independent members **observe** other authority meetings
- Standards committee independent members **contribute** to other authority meetings (*a box will appear to ask for further details about what kind of contribution*)
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

10) How can the public access information about your standards committee?

- Dedicated standards committee section on the authority website (*you will be asked for the website address if selected*)
- Within 'council and democracy' type section of website (*you will be asked for the website address if selected*)
- Ethical standards issues have been included in the local press / media
- Standards committee minutes, agendas, and reports are available to the public
- Leaflets and/or posters are placed in public buildings
- Places articles in the authority newsletter / bulletin / other publication
- Standards committee meetings are observed by members of the public
- Information is not available to the public
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

11) What else does the authority do to promote the work of the standards committee and standards generally to the public and other partners?

Open question

PART 2: INFLUENCE

A key factor in creating a strong ethical framework in authorities is clear ethical leadership from leaders and chief executives, setting the tone for the rest of the organisation.

Your responses to this section will help us to understand how closely your standards committee works with political and officer leadership in the authority, and the ways in which the leadership encourages strong ethical standards.

12) How does the standards committee communicate ethical issues to the senior figures within your authority (for example the Chief Executive and Leader of the Authority, Party Leaders)?

- Formal meetings between standards committee members and senior figures specifically set up to discuss standards
- Informal discussion on particular standards issues
- Senior figure attendance at standards committee meetings
- Monitoring Officer is a member of or attends Corporate Management Team (or equivalent) meetings
- Executive or senior member has portfolio responsibility for standards
- Chair (or other standards committee member) addresses full authority meeting(s)
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

13) How do the senior figures in your authority demonstrate strong ethical values?

- Through a strongly promoted whistle-blowing policy
- By ensuring there are references to ethics in the authority vision / objectives
- Demonstrating appropriate behaviours
- Senior figure(s) makes personal commitment to standards in statements to public/employees
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

14) Does your authority have a protocol for partnership working that outlines the standards of behaviour expected of all those working in partnership?

YES/NO

15) What mechanisms does the authority use for dealing with member/officer and/or member/member disputes?

- Informal discussion/mediation
- Monitoring Officer mediation
- Chair of standards committee mediation
- Senior figure mediation (e.g. Chief Executive)
- Advice from Human Resources department
- Solicitor / legal adviser consulted
- Informal hearing
- No mechanisms other than normal complaints process
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

PART 3: TRAINING AND SUPPORT

A specific function of a standards committee is to train members on The Code of Conduct, or arrange for such training. A standards committee can also arrange training on the local standards framework. Your responses to this section will help us to form a view about what the most common topics and methods of training are so that we can share them with the rest of the standards community.

16) Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010, has the authority assessed the training and development needs of authority members in relation to their responsibilities on standards of conduct?

YES/NO. If yes, go to q18. If no, go to q17

17) If no, please give your reasons why?

Open question. Go to q19

18) If yes, what needs were identified?

- Introduction to the Code of Conduct
- Elements of the Code of Conduct
- The role and responsibilities of the standards committee
- Ethical governance/behaviour
- None

19) What training/support was provided during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?

- Introduction to the Code of Conduct
- Elements of the Code of Conduct
- Role and responsibilities of the standards committee
- Ethical governance/behaviour
- Other (You will be asked for more details if selected)
- None (go to q25)

20) Who received training/support?

- Standards committee chair
- Independent members
- Other standards committee members
- All authority members
- Specific authority members with particular needs (e.g. new members, planning committee members)
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

21) What methods were employed to give training/support?

- Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops)
- External trainer/speaker
- One on one training
- Joint/regional training event
- Online learning
- Guidance notes/briefing materials
- Standards for England materials
- Ethical governance toolkit
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

22) In which areas of the Code of Conduct has training/support been provided?
(*Only displayed if 'elements of the Code of Conduct' is selected at q19*)

- Respect
- Personal/Prejudicial Interests
- Use of resources
- Bullying
- Disrepute
- Predisposition, Pre-determination and bias
- Equality
- Confidentiality
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

23) What other training/support has been provided on areas of an authority member's role or activities they may engage in?

- Chairing skills
- Lobbying
- Predetermination, Predisposition and bias
- Blogging and/or the use of social media
- Electioneering
- Freedom of Information (FOI)
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)
- None

24) In general, how well attending was the training provided?

- 75% or more of those invited
- 50-75%
- 25-50%
- 0-25%

25) Please give a brief overview of how standards issues are covered in your induction process for new members of the authority?

Open question

26) In which areas of the role and responsibilities of the standards committee has training/support been provided for standards committee members? Please tick all that apply. (*Only displayed if 'role and responsibilities of the standards committee' is selected at q19*)

- Initial assessments
- Other action/mediation
- Reviews
- Investigations
- Hearings
- Sanctions
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

PART 4: INVESTIGATIONS

27) How many investigations have been conducted during the period 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010?

Enter number

If the answer is '0', go to q33 (only if your authority is parished). If you do not have parished you will have completed the questions.

If the answer is '1' or more go to q28

28) Of the investigations completed during the period, for how many have external investigators been used?

NOTE: This includes employees of other authorities

Enter number

29) Overall, what was your principle reason for out-sourcing the investigation(s)? (*Only appears the number given in question 28 is more than 0*)

- Impartiality
- Lack of staff resources
- To complete the investigation sooner
- Skills required
- Cost
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

30) What type of external investigator(s) did you use?

- Employee of another authority
- Self-employed investigator
- Private law firm
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

31) For the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010, what was the approximate total cost of fees paid to the external investigator(s)?

Open question (for an amount)

32) Please provide a brief overview of the processes you have in place to ensure the quality of local investigations.

Open question

PART 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

(You will only be asked these questions if your authority has parishes)

We recognise the value of the vital role parish councillors play in representing their communities. Your responses to this section will help us to build a clearer picture of the level of support and communication between principle and parish/town councils.

33) Has your authority provided training for parish councillors during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?

YES/NO. If yes go to q34. If no go to q37

34) If yes, what topics did the training cover?

- Freedom of Information (FOI)
- Confidential information
- Planning
- Lobbying
- Dual-hatted members
- The Code of Conduct generally
- Personal and prejudicial interests
- Bullying
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

35) What methods were employed to give training/support?

- Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops)
- External speakers
- One on one training
- Joint/regional event
- Guidance notes/briefing materials
- Standards for England's materials
- CALC speakers
- Part of wider parish liaison meeting

Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

36) In general, how well attended was the training for parish councillors?

- 75% or more of those invited
- 50-75% of those invited
- 25-50%
- 0-25%

37) Has your authority provided training for parish clerks during the period 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010?

YES/NO If yes got to q38. If no go to q41

38) What topics did the training for parish clerks cover?

- Freedom of Information (FOI)
- Working with confidential information
- Planning
- Lobbying
- Dual-hatted members
- The Code of Conduct generally
- Personal and prejudicial interests
- Bullying
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

39) If yes, what methods were employed to give training/support to parish clerks?

- One on one training
- Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops)
- External speakers
- Guidance notes/briefing materials
- Standards for England's materials
- Joint authority/regional event
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

40) In general, how well attended was the training for parish clerks?

- 75% or more of those invited
- 50-75% of those invited
- 25-50%
- 0-25%

41) Does your council have a COMPACT (a formal agreement with your county Association of Local Councils about supporting standards for parish and town councils in the area)?

YES/NO

42) Describe the relationship between your authority and your County Association of Local Councils in relation to standards. For example, how regularly do you interact with them? Are you involved in delivering joint training?

Open question

43) Standards for England and Teesside University are currently researching the role of the Parish Liaison Officer. Teesside University have created a brief questionnaire to assess the organisational background, functions and skills needed to carry out the Parish Liaison role. Does your authority have a Parish Liaison Officer?

YES/NO/No but there is someone who fulfils the same functions

If yes or someone who fulfils the same functions go to q44. If no go to q45

44) Does the Parish Liaison Officer (or the person who fulfils the same functions) consent for the University of Teesside to contact them to complete a brief questionnaire about their role?

YES/NO If yes you will be asked the details below. If no go to q45.

If yes, please provide contact details (where there are multiple Parish Liaison Officers, just provide one contact):

Name:

Contact address:

Contact phone:

Email address:

45) What steps have you taken when dealing with parishes which have had problems with standards issues? For example, what preventative or capacity building work have you done with parishes?

Open question

46) Which of the following areas would you like Standards for England to produce additional guidance on to support your work with parishes?

- Lobbying
- Predetermination and bias
- Planning and interests
- Dual-hatted members
- Other (*you will be asked for more details if selected*)

Annual Return 2010 - Guidance notes

INTRODUCTION

These guidance notes have been produced to assist you in preparing your answers to the questions in our annual return for 2010.

All of the questions are included in these notes, and we have provided additional information where we think there may be an element of a question that is not entirely straightforward. For example, we have provided further explanation where a question uses a term or phrase that is specific to the standards community but may not be universally understood by everyone who comes into contact with the annual return.

Our additional information also includes more detail about the questions and about the types of answers we expect, and reasoning behind the inclusion of particular questions.

PART 1: COMMUNICATION

Annual Report

1) Does the standards committee produce an annual report?

Last year's annual return showed that 59% of standards committees produced an annual report. We are interested in finding out if this figure has changed.

2) What does the report contain?

You will not need to answer this question if you have indicated that the standards committee does not produce a report.

For those that answer "yes" to question 1, we have provided a list of some of the common elements we found when reviewing a number of standards committee annual reports from last year. You can select as few or as many of these elements as are applicable. If the annual report contains elements that are not included in our list, select "other" and a box will appear for you to type in a description.

An item in the list is "*forward work plan*" – by this we mean a detailed programme of standards committee objectives and proposed activities, rather than simply a timetable of future meetings.

3) How is the standards committee annual report circulated?

If your return is not on the website please forward a copy to us. See guidance notes for details.

You will not need to answer this question if you have indicated that the standards committee does not produce a report.

For those that answer "yes" to question 1, we have provided a list of some of the common ways that standards committee annual reports could be circulated. You can select as few or as many of these as are applicable. If your standards committee annual report is circulated in a different way, select "other" and a box will appear for you to type in a description.

If you indicate that the report is available on the authority website, you will be asked to provide a URL (web address).

Standards committee annual reports provide us with valuable detail and context about the work of the standards community. If yours is not available on the authority website, but you would like to share it with Standards for England, you can email a copy (preferably in PDF or Microsoft Word format) to our monitoring team at authorityreturns@standardsforengland.gov.uk. If sending by post, the address is:

The Monitoring Team
Standards for England
4th Floor, Griffin House
40 Lever Street
Manchester
M21 9LB

Publicising Complaints

4) How can the public access information about how to make a complaint against a member?

We have provided a list of some of the common ways that the public might access information about how to make a complaint against a member. You can select as few or as many of these as are applicable. If your authority uses a different method, select “other” and a box will appear for you to type in a description.

If you indicate that the authority website is a way that the public can access information you will be asked to provide a URL (web address) that links to the relevant section of the website.

5) How can the public access information about the outcome of initial assessment decisions?

We have provided a list of some of the common ways that the public might access information about the outcome of initial assessment decisions. You can select as few or as many of these as are applicable. If your authority uses a different method, select “other” and a box will appear for you to type in a description.

6) How can the public access information about the outcome of investigations?

We have provided a list of some of the common ways that the public might access information about the outcome of investigations. You can select as few or as many of these as are applicable. If your authority uses a different method, select “other” and a box will appear for you to type in a description.

If you indicate that the authority website is a way that the public can access information you will be asked to provide a URL (web address) that links to the relevant section of the website.

7) Do you have a mechanism in place for measuring the satisfaction of all those involved in allegations of misconduct? For example the member, complainant, and witnesses.

This question attempts to ascertain whether you routinely gather any kind of feedback from those involved in allegations about their experience of the complaints process. This is not about whether they believe the outcome of an initial assessment, investigation, or hearing was correct, but whether they feel the whole process was conducted professionally, fairly, and in a timely manner (appropriate to the complexity of the particular allegation). The feedback could be in the form of a survey, for example.

8) If yes, please can you describe the process?

See details under question 7. You might want to include some commentary about whether you believe the mechanism has been a success. If so, describe a particular example of where it worked well. A good description here will enable us to identify and share notable practice with the rest of the standards community.

Communicating the role and work of the standards committee and standards generally

9) What does the authority do to promote the work of the standards committee and standards generally to the rest of the authority (i.e. internally)?

We have provided a list of some of the common ways that authorities promote internally the work of the standards committee and standards generally. You can select as few or as many of these as are applicable. If you indicate that your independent members contribute to authority meetings, a box will appear to ask for further details about their contribution. If your authority uses a different method, select "other" and a box will appear for you to type in a description.

10) How can the public access information about your standards committee?

We have provided a list of some of the common ways that the public might access information about standards committees. You can select as few or as many of these as are applicable. If your authority uses a different method, select "other" and a box will appear for you to type in a description.

If you indicate that the authority website is a way that the public can access information you will be asked to provide a URL (web address) that links to the relevant section of the website.

11) What else does the authority do to promote the work of the standards committee and standards generally to the public and other partners?

This is an open question for you to inform us of anything extra your authority does to promote the standards committee to a wider audience, not already covered by the preceding questions.

We will be looking to identify notable practice here to share with the rest of the standards community.

PART 2: INFLUENCE

12) How does the standards committee communicate ethical issues to the senior figures within your authority (for example the Chief Executive and Leader of the Authority, Party Leaders)?

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select “other” and you will be asked to provide extra details.

By using the term “senior figures” this question can relate to all forms of leadership within authorities. So, for example, with a police authority this could mean the Chair and the Chief Executive or for a fire authority it could be the Chair and the Chief Fire Officer.

The answers to this will help us gain a wider understanding of the level of importance a standards committee has within its authority. The focus here is on how well the standards committee and the senior figures communicate.

13) How do the senior figures in your authority demonstrate strong ethical values?

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select “other” and you will be asked to provide extra details.

This question is different to question 12 as the focus is on what responsibility the senior figures personally have for standards rather than just attending meetings they are invited to. From the responses we will be able to take a view on how well supported the work of standards committees are by senior figures.

14) Does your authority have a protocol for partnership working that outlines the standards of behaviour expected of all those working in partnership?

A partnership protocol should enable partners to agree what behaviour they can expect from each other. It can be used as a means by which they can challenge each other and hold each other to account. Having a clear and transparent behaviour protocol can help promote trust amongst the partnership and the general public, demonstrating commitment to behaviour of a certain standard.

Please answer “yes” if your authority has developed or is currently working towards a protocol which matches, or has elements of, what is described above.

15) What mechanisms does the authority use for dealing with member/officer and/or member/member disputes?

We are keen to understand how the relationships between members and between members and officers are managed other than employing the complaints process. This kind of pro-active work is very important for building and maintaining a healthy culture of standards within an authority.

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select "other" and you will be asked to provide extra details.

PART 3: TRAINING AND SUPPORT

16) Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010, has the authority assessed the training and development needs of authority members and standards committee members in relation to their responsibilities on standards of conduct?

Last year 75% of authorities indicated that they had assessed the training and development needs of members. We are interested to know if this figure has changed.

17) If no, please give your reasons why?

There may be good reasons why training and development needs were not assessed. We are interested in finding out about these circumstances.

18) If yes, what needs were identified?

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select "other" and you will be asked to provide extra details.

19) What training/support was provided during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select "other" and you will be asked to provide extra details.

20) Who received training/support?

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select 'other' and you will be asked to provide extra details.

21) What methods were employed to give training/support?

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select 'other' and you will be asked to provide extra details.

An item in the list is "*ethical governance toolkit*" – this is a group of materials designed to help local authorities assess how well they are meeting the ethical agenda and to improve further their arrangements. The toolkit consists of four main elements. Each of these is administered by either the Audit Commission or the IDeA. You can find out

more about this at

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=1115850#contents-4>

22) In which areas of the Code of Conduct has training/support been provided?

This question will only appear if the option “*elements of the Code of Conduct*” is selected at question 19.

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select “other” and you will be asked to provide extra details.

23) What other training/support has been provided on areas of an authority member’s role or activities they may engage in?

We have provided a list of activities and topic areas that members may be involved in. You can select as few or as many of these depending on what training or support has been provided. If training or support has been provided about different, but relevant topics, select “other” and a box will appear for you to type in a description.

24) In general, how well attending was the training provided?

Please select one of the options which best describes the overall attendance of the training provided during the year.

25) Please give a brief overview of how standards issues are covered in your induction process for new members of the authority?

Please give a brief indication of the level of training new members receive about the local standards framework and other relevant standards issues. Please include the topics covered and the methods used. The options in the above training questions should help guide you.

26) In which areas of the role and responsibilities of the standards committee has training/support been provided for standards committee members?

This question will only appear if “*role and responsibilities of the standards committee*” is selected at question 19. Please answer for training provided to standards committee members only.

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select ‘other’ and you will be asked to provide extra details.

PART 4: INVESTIGATIONS

27) How many investigations have been conducted during the period 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010?

This question only requires a number for an answer. In the interests of avoiding duplication of work, we would prefer to get this information from the quarterly return. However, both the annual return and the quarterly return are to be completed at around about the same time near the year end. This means that we are unlikely to have the information from the quarterly return early enough. The purpose of this question is so that the online form knows whether to display or suppress questions 28 to 31 inclusive. For example, if you have not conducted any investigations, the next question you will be presented with is number 32.

28) Of the investigations completed during the period, for how many have investigators been used?

This will only appear if the answer to question 27 is more than "0". If the answer is "0" the next question will be number 32.

This question only requires a number for an answer. This should be the number of completed investigations which have been to consideration and/or hearing and where the investigation was undertaken by someone outside of the authority. This includes employees of other authorities as well as those commercially sourced.

If you have not had any then please answer 0.

29) Overall, what was your principle reason for out-sourcing the investigation(s)?

This question will not appear if you have not completed any out-sourced investigations. Instead the next question will be number 32.

This question asks for only one reason to be selected. We understand that there may be multiple reasons for out-sourcing and they may be different from case to case. However we would like you to select what you consider to be the main reason overall, taking into account all out-sourced investigations. If your reason is not in the list please select "other" to open a text box for you to type a description of it.

30) What type of external investigator(s) did you use?

When responding to this question you can tick all the relevant answers on the list provided. Please remember to only consider the cases where an external investigator was employed.

31) For the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010, what was the approximate total cost of fees paid to the external investigator(s)?

Standards for England would like to understand the costs incurred with out-sourced investigators. This is difficult to calculate so we are asking for the total amount invoiced to you for the external investigator's work.

32) Please provide a brief overview of the methods you use to guarantee the quality of local investigations.

An example of this could be similar to the mechanisms you described in your response to question 7. A feedback survey of people involved in an investigation might be one method. Please provide as much detail as possible, as this is another area in which we would like to identify notable practice to share with the rest of the standards community.

PART 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

This section is only for authorities with parish/town councils. For those without, you have reached the end of the annual return questions.

33) Has your authority provided training for parish councillors during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?

This question is about parish councillors only; please do not take parish clerks or any other member/officer into account. You will be asked about training for parish clerks in a later section.

34) If yes, what topics did the training cover?

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select "other" and you will be asked to provide extra details.

35) What methods were employed to give training/support?

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select "other" and you will be asked to provide extra details.

36) In general, how well attended was the training for parish councillors?

This question is designed to find out about the level of "take-up" of parish councillor training. Our general understanding is that attendance levels at such events can vary significantly. We would like more concrete evidence as to whether this is true or not. Please take all parish councillor training into account, if there have been multiple events, and come to an aggregate conclusion.

37) Has your authority provided training for parish clerks during the period 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010?

Only select "yes" if there has been training specifically for parish clerks during the specified period.

38) What topics did the training for parish clerks cover?

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select "other" and you will be asked to provide extra details.

39) If yes, what methods were employed to give training/support to parish clerks?

There is a list of possible answers which you can select from and you can select all the ones which apply to your authority. If you would like to inform us of an answer not in the list, select "other" and you will be asked to provide extra details.

40) In general, how well attended was the training for parish clerks?

Please select the option that best describes the overall attendance of the training provided during the year.

41) Does your council have a Compact (a formal agreement with your County Association of Local Councils about supporting standards for parish and town councils in the area)?

A Compact is a formal document between an authority and their County Association of Local Councils. A potential outcome of the compact could be delivering joint training, for example.

42) Describe the relationship between your authority and your County Association of Local Councils in relation to standards. For example, how regularly do you interact with them? Are you involved in delivering joint training?

This question has been left open so that you have the opportunity to tell us about how you work with your County Association of Local Councils. You may also wish to refer to or expand on your answer to question 41.

43) Standards for England and Teesside University are currently researching the role of the Parish Liaison Officer. Teesside University have created a brief questionnaire to assess the organisational background, functions and skills needed to carry out the Parish Liaison role. Does your authority have a Parish Liaison Officer?

A Parish Liaison Officer acts as a point of contact between the principle authority and the parishes/town councils. They provide advice and support and will often attend parish/town council meetings. If you do not specifically have a Parish Liaison Officer

but there is someone within the authority who carries out the role described, please answer “*no, but there is someone who fulfils the same functions*”

44) Does the Parish Liaison Officer (or the person who fulfils the same functions) consent for the University of Teesside to contact them to complete a brief questionnaire about their role?

This question will only appear if you answer yes or “*no but there is someone who fulfils the same functions*” to question 43. If you have the contact details of the Parish Liaison Officer (or person with the same functions) and they consent to taking part in the research described above, please answer yes and then a box will appear for you to fill in their contact details.

45) What steps have you taken when dealing with parishes which have had problems with standards issues? For example, what preventative or capacity building work have you done with parishes?

We will use the responses to this question to identify notable practice and share it with other authorities that have parishes. Please indicate how successful the methods you used were and why you think this was the case.

46) Which of the following areas would you like Standards for England to produce additional guidance on to support your work with parishes?

We are always looking to enhance the range of guidance we produce and the parish sector is one of the key areas that we could focus on. Responses to this question will help us to identify specific areas in which guidance may prove useful.

Epping Forest Assessments Subcommittee – Active Cases

As at: 31 March 2010

Year	No.	Case reference no.	Case status	Received - (dd/mm/yyyy)	Investigator
2009	6	EFDC 1/2009/A	<p>Open - Referred to MO for investigation - External investigator to be appointed</p> <p>Investigation linked with complaint 5/2009 –</p> <p>Report Received –Assessment Subcommittee – 26/1/10</p> <p>Referred to Hearing - 1 March 2010</p> <p>Breach found at one meeting – No further action</p> <p>Case Closed</p>	17/02/2009	P Mears
2009	11	EFDC 3/2009	<p>No action - review requested - Review Subcommittee held on 21 April - Passed for investigation by MO – Final report received 31/3/2010</p> <p>Assessment Subcommittee to be arranged</p>	23/02/2009	I Willett Referred on 8/6/9

Year	No.	Case reference no.	Case status	Received - (dd/mm/yyyy)	Investigator
2009	13	EFDC 5/2009	<p>Review held on 2 June 2009 –Combined with complaint 1/2009/A – see above comment</p> <p>Report Received –Assessment Subcommittee – 26/1/10</p> <p>Referred to Hearing - 1 March 2010</p> <p>Breach found at one meeting – No further action</p> <p>Case Closed</p>	12/03/2009	P Mears
2009	14	EFDC 6/2009	<p>Assessment Panel – 27 October 2009</p> <p>Police investigation result: HFA</p> <p>Referred to Standards for England – Ethical Standards Officer appointed for investigation.</p> <p>Subject to Standards Board Direction</p>	01/10/09	n/a
2009	16	EFDC 8/2009	<p>Assessment Subcommittee held 8 December 2009 – Referred to Standards for England – Case accepted for investigation.</p> <p>Subject to Standards Board Direction</p>	19/11/09	n/a

Year	No.	Case reference no.	Case status	Received - (dd/mm/yyyy)	Investigator
2009	17	EFDC 9/2009	Assessment Panel 21 December 2009 – referred for investigation by Monitoring Officer Referred to I Willett to investigate on 2 February 2010	30/11/09	I Willett
2009	18	EFDC 10/2009	Assessment Panel 21 December 2009 - referred for investigation by Monitoring Officer Referred to P Mears for investigation 27 January 2010 – Report due by start of April	1/12/09	P Mears
2010	19	EFDC 1/2010	Assessment Panel 22 March 2010 Referred for investigation in part	2/3/10	External TBA

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