
Standards Committee

6 October 2006

Report of the Head of Civic, Democratic and Legal Services

Standards Committee Work Plan

Summary

1. This report details areas of work to be considered for inclusion by the Standards Committee in their work plan.

Background

2. The Standards Committee has a work plan, which is reviewed at each meeting. On 5 October 2006 Full Council is to consider a recommendation from the Appointments Panel to appoint Christine Bainton as the new Independent Member and Chair of the Standards Committee. Members of the Committee have agreed that the first item of business for the new Chair should be to review the work plan and consider items for inclusion.

Consultation

3. Standards Committee members may wish to consider whether the agreed work plan is submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee for comment.

Options

4. The following areas of work are to be considered by members of the Standards Committee for inclusion in the work plan.
5. Members may consider which of all or any of the items listed below ought to be included and the timescale for commencement and completion of each area of work.

Review of the Council's Complaints Procedure

The Standards Committee has in the past expressed some concerns regarding the existing Complaints Procedure and expressed an interest in the outcome of the ongoing review. Members need to consider whether they wish to include this issue in the work plan for further consideration.

Amendments to the Members' Code of Conduct

Members of the Standards Committee are aware that the Members' Code of Conduct is to be the subject of amendment. Central Government is to produce regulations shortly setting out the proposed changes. The Standards Committee will need to consider its role in terms of publicising the amendments and raising awareness of any issues arising there from.

Advice to Elected Members re activities during the purdah period

Standards Committee members will be aware that the term of office for CYC Elected Members expires in May 2007. There is to be a local election for all Members on 3rd May 2007. Standards Committee members may feel it is appropriate for them to provide advice to Members on issues of conduct for consideration in the period immediately prior to the election (the purdah period).

Parish Councils – Good Practice at Meetings

Standards Committee Members will be aware that some concerns have been expressed regarding practices adopted at Parish Council meetings. Standards Committee Members may feel it is appropriate to offer some guidance to Parish Councils regarding good practice for recording decisions and declarations of interest.

Annual Report

Standards Committee has previously produced an Annual Report to CYC Council in April. This requirement is now embodied in the new Council Constitution. Standards Committee Members will need to consider the contents of the Annual Report for the municipal year 2006/07.

Ethical Governance Audit

The Standards Board for England, the Audit Commission and IDEa have developed an ethical governance toolkit to help Councils have a better understanding of how well they are meeting the ethical agenda and how they can further improve their arrangements. The first step for undertaking the ethical audit is to complete a self-assessment survey to assess the awareness of ethical issues across the organisation. The Standards Committee need to consider whether they wish to undertake the self-assessment survey and develop a programme for undertaking the full audit.

Analysis

6. All of the proposed areas of work will improve the governance arrangements of the Council and/or Parish Councils. However, some of the areas of work will require significant resources from both Officers and Members. Members will, therefore, need to consider the work plan proposals in the context of the amount of Officer and Member time required to deliver each area of work.

Corporate Priorities

7. The areas of work identified should contribute to the corporate priority of improving the Council's focus on the needs of customers and residents in designing and providing services and should improve leadership at all levels to provide clear, consistent direction to the organisation.

Implications

8. The implications are as listed below :

- **Financial**

There may be financial implications if the Standards Committee is proposing to undertake a full ethical governance audit as support is recommended from both the Audit Commission and the IDEa which may have a cost attached to it. If the Standards Committee is minded to undertake the initial self-assessment and that self-assessment outcome suggests a full ethical audit then a further report will need to be brought to the Standards Committee identifying the potential cost and how it is to be met.

- **Human Resources (HR)**

None

- **Equalities**

None

- **Legal**

None

- **Crime and Disorder**

None

- **Information Technology (IT)**

None

- **Property**

None

Risk Management

9. There are no specific risks attached to any of the areas of work identified. However, the work plan is designed to improve governance arrangements, raise awareness of ethical issues and maintain high standards of conduct.

All of these represent appropriate risk management tools to ensure the organisation operates effectively.

Recommendations

10. The Standards Committee are asked to consider the items of work listed in paragraph 5 above and select those which they feel it is appropriate for them to include in its annual programme of work.

The reason for the recommendation is to improve the corporate governance, awareness of ethical issues and maintain high standards of conduct within the organisation and to ensure that the Standards Committee meets its responsibilities set out in the Council's Constitution, specifically to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the Members and Co-opted Members of the Council and take a general overview on all ethical issues and issues of probity.

Contact Details

Author:

Suzan Hemingway
Head of Civic, Democratic and
Legal Services
Chief Executive's Department
Tel No. 01904 551004

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Suzan Hemingway
Head of Civic, Democratic and Legal Services

Report Approved**Date**15th
2006

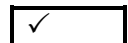
September

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

None

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

None