

PROMOTING HIGHER STANDARDS – ACTION PLAN

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following detailed consideration of (a) the Audit Commission's definition of a Standards Committee that is performing well, (b) the debate at the 2008 Assembly of Standards Committees on "higher standards" and (c) those activities carried out by other authorities judged to be performing well, this Committee, at its last meeting, agreed an Action Plan comprising a programme of initiatives to promote higher standards of behaviour within the authority.
- 1.2 Members are invited to review the Action Plan that is appended to this report and note the progress to date.

2 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES** to note and endorse the revised Action Plan.

John Honey

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Background Papers:-

None

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STANDARDS COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN 2009-11**1. Aims**

- To raise the profile and understanding of the Ethical Governance agenda and the work of the Standards Committee internally and externally

2. Key Priorities:

- To communicate clear and consistent key messages highlighting the Council's commitment to being an ethical organization by ensuring that councillors uphold their civic responsibilities and conduct their business in an ethical manner.
- To clarify and raise the profile of the role of Councillors in order to enhance the public perception
- To encourage public involvement in and understanding of ethical standards at parish and district level

3. Actions

Aim	Action	How	Who	When
Internal				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved awareness of Standards issues • Greater understanding of the role of the Standards 	Regular meetings between Chief Executive/Leader and Chairman of the Standards Committee	Twice yearly meetings	Cex/Leader Chairman of Standards	April & October Ongoing
	Information in Members' Bulletin	Regular updates on	Monitoring	Quarterly

<p>Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of the Standards Committee promoted • Improved understanding amongst Officers and Members as to the importance of Ethical Governance • Clear and consistent messages highlighting the council's commitment to being an ethical organization • Greater understanding of the role of Councillors and Officers and encourage pro-active promotion of ethical standards. • Greater understanding of the Code of Conduct and other Council protocols • Greater understanding of partnerships and members and officers interests • Improve the speed with which local determinations are completed 	summarizing general developments in Standards	specific issues and a copy of the Standards for England Bulletin	Officer	Ongoing
	Ensure Independent Members and Parish Councilors have a good understanding of how the business of the Council is conducted	Formal invitation for Independent Members to attend and observe meetings of the Executive and the Council and its Committees	HICS	Ongoing
	Staff briefings to promote and raise awareness of standards issues	Use of the monthly staff briefing notes.	Monitoring Officer	Annually
	Continue programme of ethical standards training for Members and Officers	Ensure that ethical standards are included in the annual training programme.	HICS	Ongoing
	Review provision of ethical guidance in Members and Officers induction	Review training and written material in inductions	Monitoring Officer	By May 2010
	Hold training sessions for potential investigators	Internal training for Officers	Monitoring Officer	July-December 2010
	Review protocol on Member/Officer relations and code of conduct for officers	Officer review pending further consultation on a statutory code expect 2010	Monitoring Officer	April 2010

	Meet “top people”	Invite senior Members and Officers to present views on standards to the Standards Committee	HICS	Ongoing
	Promote all training sessions and keep attendance at mandatory training under review.	Continue to improve quality and relevance of training and promotional material. Annual report on attendance.	HICS	Ongoing

Aim	Action	How	Who	When
External				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved understanding amongst the public, local communities and stakeholders about what the Council does to ensure it is governing ethically Clear and consistent messages highlighting the 	Review information and presentation of Standards page on website	Improve accessibility, prominence and quality of information	Monitoring Officer/ Communications Team	Completed December 2010
	Use Rochford District Matters to raise profile of standards and the work of the Standards Committee	Article for Rochford District Matters	Monitoring Officer	Summer Edition 2010

Council's commitment to being an ethical organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile of the role of councillors promoted • Clarify the Council's complaints procedures • Provide full information to Standards Board • Improved understanding of whistle-blowing practices Agreed set of standards with entering into contracts	Standards Committee annual report to Standards for England	Annual feedback	Monitoring Officer	Annually in May Ongoing
	Include ethical topics for discussion during Local Democracy Week	Review potential for inclusion in activities at Schools and the Civic Suite	Standards Committee Members	Annually in October Ongoing
	Review Whistleblowing policy and contracts procedure	Officer Review	Monitoring Officer/Chief Finance Officer	Annually Ongoing

Aim	Action	How	Who	When
Parishes				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness amongst Parish Members of the role of the Standards Committee and the local 	Ensure that all parishes have a copy of the Parish Council Governance toolkit	Write to all parish clerks. Provide advice and assistance as necessary	Monitoring Officer	Completed December 2009
	Provide a training session for Parish	Internal training through officers for all parish	Monitoring	By April 2010

<div>determination framework</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise awareness of the application of the Code of Conduct	Clerks	clerks	Officer	
	Feedback information from the Ninth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees to all Parishes	Briefing paper	Monitoring Officer	Completed December 2009