

## **WORK PROGRAMME FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Role and Functions of the Standards Committee derive from primary and secondary legislation and the Council's Constitution. The Work Programme for the Standards committee must therefore link to these roles and functions.

### **Statutory Authority**

The Council is required to operate a Standards Committee pursuant to s53 of the Local Government Act 2000. These requirements are expanded within the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008. The legislation sets out the general functions of a Standards Committee as being:

- (a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by the members and co-opted members of the authority, and
- (b) assisting members and co-opted members of the authority to observe the authority's code of conduct.
- (c) advising the authority on the adoption or revision of a code of conduct,
- (d) monitoring the operation of the authority's code of conduct, and
- (e) advising, training or arranging to train members and co-opted members of the authority on matters relating to the authority's code of conduct.

The Act states that the Council may arrange for their standards committee to exercise such other functions as it considers appropriate.

### **Council's Constitution**

The Council's Constitution outlines the roles and functions of the Standards committee. These roles and functions are;

- a) Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted Members;
- b) Assisting the Councillors and co-opted Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct, as contained within Part 5 of this Constitution;
- c) Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Code of Conduct for Councillors;
- d) Monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct for Councillors;
- e) Advising, training or arranging to train Councillors and co-opted Members on matters relating to the Code of Conduct for Councillors;

- f) Granting dispensations to Councillors and co-opted Members from requirements relating to interests set out in the Code of Conduct for Councillors;
- g) Dealing with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal and any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matter which is referred by an Ethical Standards Officer to the Monitoring Officer;
- h) The exercise of paragraphs (a) to (g) above in relation to the Parish Councils wholly within the District of North Hertfordshire and the members of those Parish Councils;
- i) To determine local initial assessments into allegations of misconduct by local district and parish councillors etc., by way of a system of Assessment, Review and Hearing Sub-Committees.
- k) To provide advice and guidance to Councillors and co-opted Members and to make arrangements for training on any matter within these Terms of Reference.
- l) To deal with applications for exemption from political restriction or to consider whether to include a post within the list of politically restricted posts.

#### Additional Roles of the Standards Committee

- a) Submission of recommendations to the Council on Codes and protocols;
- b) Oversight of the Register of Members' Interests;
- c) Overview of the Whistle Blowing Policy;
- d) Overview of complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations.

The Monitoring Officer is required to contribute to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct through the provision of support to the Standards Committee.

This work programme for the Standards Committee comprises:

- Table of regular agenda items which will be brought to the Committee annually
- Table of ongoing work subject to review at each Committee meeting

**CALENDAR OF ITEMS FOR THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE INCLUDING:**

- [Forward planning: Matters for consideration at Standards Committee 2010- 2011](#)
- **Annual Calendar of regular items for the Standards Committee**

Timescale	Work Action	Updated Position
Ongoing throughout the year	<p>Ongoing updating to Council as necessary / liaison between Members and the Chair of Standards Committee</p> <p>Training for: Standards Committee Members District Council Members Parish and Town Councils</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Joint training for Standards Committee members was offered on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2009 with Broxbourne Borough–Council. A number of members attended.</p> <p>The Chair and Vice chair of the Committee attended the Standards Board Annual Conference, October 2009</p> <p>Training on Standards Hearings was offered by Hertsmere Borough Council on 4 November 2009. Two members attended.</p> <p>Committee Members were shown, and discussed a Standards Board DVD, ‘<i>Assessments made clear</i>’ 10th November 2009</p> <p>Members agreed at their meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009 for more joint training with Broxbourne for early 2010. Code of Conduct training has been scheduled for 19 July 2010 for new District and Parish members. This can be offered to all NHDC Members. Broxbourne have asked for a few members to be able to attend NHDC’s training.</p>

	<p>Meetings with Parish/Town Councils in the future to consider the introduction of local complaints processes to curtail the number of Code of Conduct complaints</p> <p>Code of Conduct Complaint Handling (Assessment Sub Committee, Review Sub Committee etc)</p> <p>Reporting of new draft Code when available</p>	<p>There was no general governance training arranged for District and Parish Council members, (other than Standards Committee members) during 2009/10. It had been agreed that this would be carried forward to be undertaken following the Elections. The MO had been discussing joint training with other Council's. Despite an initial encouraging response, this has not progressed. The Monitoring Officer will be continuing discussions with other Councils about the option for joint training for all members in relation to the Code of Conduct. However it is anticipated that there may be some preference to await the development of the national political agenda in this area.</p> <p>The volume of complaints made under the code of conduct has significantly decreased. There are no current open complaints.</p> <p>This is ongoing and was pending publication of a new Code. However this may be significantly impacted by the proposed Decentralisation and Localism bill.</p>
<p>July – September 2010</p>	<p>New Declarations of Office and Registers of Interest to be received within 28 days</p> <p>Draft selection protocol on recruitment of parish members to be approved by Standards Committee and referred to Council Recruitment to vacant parish seat on Standards Committee</p>	<p>Monitoring is underway following the elections in May 2010. At the time of writing not all Declarations have been received. They are being chased and the matter will be referred to the Chair of the Standards Committee if necessary.</p> <p>Report to Annual Council on 20 May 2010. Recruitment can now be progressed.</p>

	<p>MO to work with Audit Manager to produce protocols for processing of confidential reports under Confidential Reporting Policy</p> <p>Advice/Guidance on publication of members interests and other registers on the Council's website</p>	<p>This will be commenced prior to 31 August 2010. An earlier timescale had been indicated however this was not possible due to other workload.</p> <p>A Report is to be taken to Council by the Monitoring Officer following the Standards Committee meeting on 23.2.10. It is anticipated that this will go to the meeting on 23 September 2010.</p>
July – September annually	Review of Confidential Reporting code	This will be reviewed in line with the work to produce Protocols with the Audit Manager referred to above.
	Review of Gifts and Hospitality policy and register for members	<p>This will be reviewed. There is also a need to consider the Officers Policy in relation to this area to ensure consistency.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer had previously indicated that when this was ready it would be put before Standards committee for approval prior to adoption by full Council. However the Monitoring Officer has since re-considered the Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee, and this item is not directly within the Terms of Reference for Standards Committee.</p>
	Review of Register of Interests and training for members	The review of the Register of Interests will be commencing shortly.
October – December 2010	Revise and approve the Member / Officer protocol and refer to Council to amend the Constitution	Work commenced on this during 2009/10. It needs to be progressed and concluded and will form part of the constitution review work programme for 2010/11.
October – December annually	Review of Conflicts of Interest policy	Following a review by Internal Audit, a review of the Policy has been recommended. This will be undertaken by 31 August 2010.
January – March annually	Recruitment of parish and independent members (tri-annually, and when any vacancies rise)	

April – June annually	Review of Code of Conduct complaints	The Annual Return to Standards for England is before the Committee.
	Indemnity confirmation for independent members	The Monitoring Officer will be reviewing this.
	Annual report to full Council on the work of the Standards Committee	Chair of Standards Committee to present
	<p>Quarterly and Annual Returns to Standards Board to be completed and reported to Standards Committee</p> <p>Review local authorities who have been acknowledged by Standards Board to consider whether any methods used by them can be considered by NHDC</p>	<p>All returns completed on time. Quarterly reporting has now been suspended by Standards for England.</p> <p>This proposed work will be kept under review depending on the detail of the Decentralisation and Localism bill.</p>