

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

31ST MARCH 2009

Quarterly and Annual Returns to the Standards Board for England

OPEN	
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Monitoring Officer
CONTACT OFFICER:	Mrs C S Newlands Ext. 2715
APPENDICES	None

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. The Standards Board for England published Bulletin 42 at the end of February 2009. Contained within the Bulletin was some information regarding quarterly and annual returns that have to be submitted to the Standards Board for England.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to DECIDE:**

That the information in this report be noted.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. Quarterly Returns

The Monitoring Officer sends a return quarterly to the Standards Board for England outlining the number of cases reviewed by the Council's Assessment Sub-Committee. To date, our returns have been nil returns and our returns have been sent in well within the time frame allowed.

- 3.2. The number of Members on our Standards Committee is the same as the average Council with a number of Parish/Town Councils.

- 3.3. The returns indicate that since reporting commenced 2,030 cases have been recorded (this covers the period 8th May until 31st December 2008). Approximately 69% of authorities have dealt with at least one case during the first three quarters. Of all the authorities with cases, the average recorded is two per quarter. Generally there are fewer cases recorded under this new system than under the old arrangements but the first quarter started late due to the legislation not being introduced until 8 May 2008.

- 3.4. Of the complaints recorded, 56% are from members of the public and 34% are from council members. The remaining 10% are from a

combination of officers, parish or town clerks, MPs, monitoring officers and those completing the form as 'other.'

- 3.6. Of the cases referred in 52% of the cases no action was taken, 6% were referred to the Standards Board, 1% were referred to the Monitoring Officer for other action, 28% were referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation and 14% were referred to another authority.
- 3.7. There have been 344 requests for a review of 'no further actions decisions. 95% of these remained as 'no further action' after review. The other 5% were either referred for investigation or referred to the Standards Board for England.

Annual Returns

- 3.8. From April 2009 the Standards Board for England intends collecting information from Standards Committees regarding:

- Protocols for Officer/Member Relationships
- The existence of any mechanisms for dealing with Member/Member and Member/Officer disputes
- The Chair of the Standards Committee's relationship with the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Leader of the Council
- What our Standards Committee does in promoting its work both within the authority and externally
- The general activities of the Standards committee (e.g. providing training)
- Any achievements in supporting standards.

- 3.9 The Annual Return will take the form of an online questionnaire.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1. The Monitoring Officer will be responsible for submitting both returns and these are diarised to ensure that they are completed on time.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The financial implications can be met from existing budgets.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The Monitoring officer is required to complete the required information for the Standards Board under guidelines introduced on 8th May 2008.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1. Failure to submit the required return might result in intervention by the Standards Board for England.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1. Whilst the returns are a mandatory requirement they do provide information which the Standards Board for England can use to impart guidance to Monitoring Officer and Standards Committees. The returns also indicate how well the Code of Conduct is being observed by Members.

9. CONSULTEES

- 9.1. Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1. Bulletin 42 Standards Board for England
10.2. Bulletin 39 Standards Board for England