

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

6TH APRIL 2011

Annual Report 2010/2011

OPEN	
DIRECTOR:	Monitoring Officer
CONTACT OFFICER:	Caroline Newlands, Ext. 2715 Caroline.newlands@wyreforetcd.gov.uk
APPENDICES	Annual Report 2010/2011

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To appraise the Ethics and Standards Committee of the Annual Report to be submitted to Annual Council in May 2011 which outlines the activities of the Ethics and Standards Committee for the 2010/2011 municipal year.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to DECIDE that:

- 2.1 **The report be agreed and be included on the agenda of Annual Council.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Standards for England encouraged Standards Committees to produce an Annual Report as it is considered good practice to do so.
- 3.2 This is the third Annual Report that has been produced.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Annual Report is included on the Council's website and includes the following:
- Role
 - Terms of Reference
 - Statistical Information
 - Summary of Complaints
 - Training

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council is required to promote high standards of ethical governance through guidelines issued by Standards for England

7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of equalities groups and there are no major issues.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Council is keen to promote transparency and high standards of governance by publishing the Annual Report on its website.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 Legal Services

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Guidance, Standards for England Annual Return 2010

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ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2010/2011

Foreword by the Monitoring Officer

The Localism Bill places a duty on authorities to shape and maintain high ethical standards but it is local choice as to what a local authority puts in place to achieve this. The publication of the Localism Bill has concentrated the minds of those involved in ethics and standards on what the future of such committees will be. The Council is keen to promote high standards of governance and will have to decide in the light of the Localism Bill's recommendations what stance it will take on ethical governance in the future.

Reverend J A Cox
Chairman – Ethics and Standards Committee

Activities

The Ethics and Standards Committee met four times during the 2010/2011 municipal year and debated a range of topics including:

- Dispensations
- The Future of Standards for England
- Complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman 2009/2010
- Partnership Behaviour Protocol
- Outcome Hearings Sub Committee meeting
- The Localism Bill and its implications for Ethics and Standards

Members of the Ethics and Standards Committee

Independent Members

Reverend J A Cox (Chairman)

Mrs C A Noons

Mr T J Hipkiss

Mr R Reynolds

Town and Parish Members

Vacancy for Town Council Member

Councillor R Hobson

Councillor J Swift

Wyre Forest District Council Members

Councillor R Bishop

Councillor H E Dyke

Councillor P Dyke

Councillor D R Godwin

Councillor M J Hart

Councillor T Ingham

Councillor C D Nicholls

Councillor K J Stokes

Councillor J Thomas

Terms of Reference

1. Promotes and maintains high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members.
2. Assists the councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
3. Advises the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct.
4. Monitors the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct.
5. Advises, trains or arranges to train councillors and co-opted members and on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.

7. Considers complaints against any member relating to alleged breach of the National Code of Local Government Conduct or such local code as shall replace the National Code, to make findings of fact and decisions in respect of the action to be taken, and where necessary to make recommendations to full Council.
8. Advises and brings forward proposals to the Council on a local Code of Conduct, including provisions which properly reflect the mandatory elements of the Model Code to be produced nationally, once such a code is available.
9. Exercises (1) to (8) above in relation to the parish councils wholly or mainly within the Wyre Forest District area and the members of those parish councils.
10. Recommends approval and adoption of relevant codes, plans and policies.
11. Oversees the Whistle Blowing Policy.
12. Oversees the complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations.
13. Keeping the operation of the constitution under review so far as it relates to ethics and standards of behaviour.

Local Determination of Complaints

During the 2010/2011 municipal year there has been one case that was referred to the Assessment Sub-Committee which was subsequently referred for investigation and finally a hearing by the Hearings Sub-Committee.

The Hearings Sub-Committee found that there had been a breach of the Code of Conduct and the Member concerned was required to undertake training on the Code of Conduct before she returned to her committee work.

Complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman 2009/2010

The Committee considered a report that outlined the outcome of complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman for the municipal year 2009/2010.

Three complaints had been investigated by the ombudsman and this was the lowest number of complaints received in the past 9 years. Moreover, it was noted that for the fourth year running the Ombudsman had concluded that there had been no maladministration or injustice.

Training

A training session was held in May 2010. The training took the form of an interactive session where the Monitoring Officer asked the participants questions and then the group considered the answers that were given to the questions.

A number of parish members attended and the feedback was very positive on this training session.

Review of Constitution

Pursuant to the Terms of Reference of this Committee the Ethics and Standards Committee will need to make appropriate recommendations to Council to specify new statutory requirements to establish, promote and maintain high standards of ethical governance. The Committee will need to formulate and make recommendations to Council to specify future requirements for ethics under the Localism Bill.