

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

18 May 2009

Update re use of standards statements

0.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members regarding the use made of the various Council statements regarding standards issues.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 On the recommendation of the Standards Committee, the following statements regarding ethical issues have been agreed:

CEO and Leader general ethics statement

Standards of behaviour within the Council are regulated by national Codes of Conduct and the ethical framework introduced in 2002. The Council is proactive in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct through its Standards Committee, which has a wide remit and full work programme.

Whilst standards of behaviour within the Council are excellent, there is no room for complacency. We fully subscribe to the principles underpinning the ethical framework and expect all Members and Officers to do the same. We are both committed to working together to lead by example and upholding the ethical wellbeing and effective governance of the Council.

JOHN WEIGHELL

Leader of the Council

JOHN MARSDEN

Chief Executive Officer

Council's statement re standards

North Yorkshire County Council believes in a strong ethical organisational culture. It aims to promote the highest levels of conduct by its members and officers, to increase public trust in the delivery of its vision and its objectives, by:

- (i) maintaining openness and transparency in conducting its business;**
- (ii) being accountable for all it says and does;**
- (iii) ensuring that everyone knows what is expected of them;**
- (iv) offering appropriate training and development programmes; and**
- (v) promoting the work of its Standards Committee.**

Council's ethical statement for stakeholders

North Yorkshire County Council believes in a strong ethical culture. The conduct of its members and officers in fulfilling their roles is regulated by national Codes of Conduct and a comprehensive complaints framework.

Standards of behaviour within the Council are generally excellent: the Council continues, however, to promote the ethical agenda to ensure the existing high standards are maintained; and the Leader and Chief Executive Officer are committed to working together to lead by example and to uphold the ethical wellbeing and effective governance of the Council.

In working with partners and service providers on Council business, the Council requires similarly high standards from those with whom it works.

Statement re role of senior managers in ethical framework

The Council's senior managers recognise the importance of the ethical agenda within the authority: they will ensure that those whom they manage are clear about their respective roles and what is expected of them; managers will also encourage and promote the highest standards of conduct amongst their staff, at all times leading by example. Managers will have due regard to the advice of the Monitoring Officer and the Standards Committee, and will seek such advice where necessary.

- 2.2 The Committee previously indicated it would like to be updated periodically on the use made of the various standards statements.

3.0 USE OF THE STATEMENTS

3.1 The Committee has previously been briefed on the use made of the statements. Some further specific use has been made of the statements and that is detailed below.

Council's ethical statement for stakeholders

3.2 The Committee previously agreed that the statement should be published on the Council's website and Intranet and also incorporated, where appropriate, into contractual and procurement documentation. Members were informed in the last update report as to the extensive use made of this statement. It has been fully incorporated into work practices and has been included in the Council's Procurement Manual and in some of the procurement precedent documentation.

Council's statement re standards

3.3 This statement was specifically published in the Council's weekly email newsletter 'Key Messages' on 21 September 2007, shortly after adoption of the statement.

3.4 The standards pages on the Council's website have been generally updated regarding the new local ethical framework and the increase in size of the Standards Committee. The Council statement on standards has been published at the start of the 'Councillor Conduct' page on the website.

3.5 Certain standards download documents on the Council's website are being further reviewed and the statements will be used where appropriate.

3.6 The general Council statement has also recently been submitted for inclusion at the beginning of the introductory page for the Officers' E-Induction facility.

Council's statement re role of senior managers in ethical framework

3.7 The Council's standards statement for senior managers has been published at the beginning of the standards page on the Council's Intranet regarding 'Conduct and Disciplinary' (found under 'C' in A-Z Index).

3.8 A link to the 'Councillor Conduct' section of the Council's website has been included on the Intranet's 'Conduct and Disciplinary' page to link officer standards of conduct to the general ethical framework of the Authority.

CEO and Leader general ethics statement

3.9 This was used as a Foreword to a Standards Bulletin, circulated shortly after the statement was agreed and it is suggested that it again be used as a Foreword in the next edition of the Bulletin (also on the Committee's agenda). The latest edition of the Bulletin could also be given to all new Members of the Council after the elections in June.

3.10 The Monitoring Officer, in consultation with colleagues, is currently considering other ways in which the standards statements could be used and promoted, for example the possibility of:

- a) using the stakeholders' statement (or general Council statement) in the context of the Council's partnership working, eg including the statement on agenda frontsheets for partnership group meetings;
- b) incorporating one or more of the statements into the Corporate Complaints process when it's next reviewed;
- c) using one or more of the statements in connection with the appointment of Members to outside bodies;

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 Members will note that there has been some progress in promoting the statements. The statements will be of particular use during promotion of the forthcoming new Code of Conduct for Members later in the year.

4.2 A further report will be brought to a future meeting of the Committee, explaining the ways in which the standards statements have been used to promote the ethical framework.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Members are requested to note this report.

CAROLE DUNN

Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer

Background Documents:

Minutes of Standards Committee meetings
Minutes of County Council meeting on 18 July 2007

County Hall
NORTHALLERTON

6 May 2009