

# NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

21 September 2009

### Review of Ethical Arrangements

#### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To review the ethical arrangements in place within the Authority.

#### **2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Given the local elections in June, the Standards Committee agreed at its last meeting that it would be helpful to receive a report setting out the ethical arrangements in place within the Authority and setting out ideas for future developments based on national examples of good practice and derived from the Authority's Annual Return to Standards for England.
- 2.2 A copy of the Authority's Annual Return to Standards for England is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' information. The content of the questions and responses gives an indication of areas which could be developed further.

#### **3.0 REVIEW OF ETHICAL ARRANGEMENTS**

- 3.1 The Authority has put in place a number of processes and introduced various explanatory and guidance documents in support of the Members' Code of Conduct and the standards regime generally, as detailed below. Hard copies of all documents are also available from the Monitoring Officer.

##### **NYCC Documentation and Processes**

- 3.2 The following internal standards documentation has been agreed and periodically reviewed by the Committee and the Council and forms the Council's ethical framework:
- **Statutory Principles** of conduct (appended to the Code of Conduct for Members);
  - the Council's **Code of Conduct for Members** and supporting information about the Code (in Part 5 of the Constitution and published on the 'Councillor Conduct' section of the Council's website);
  - the supporting **NYCC Guidance Protocol** (in Part 5 of the Constitution and published on the 'Councillor Conduct' section of the Council's website);
  - the **Standards Committee Terms of Reference** (in Article 9 of the Constitution);
  - **Information about the Standards Committee and its Complaint Sub-Committees** and their roles (in Article 9 of the Constitution and published on the 'Councillor Conduct' section of the Council's website);
  - **Standards Committee Communications Strategy**;

- **Standards Committee Assessment Criteria** for the local assessment and review of complaints that Members may have breached the Code of Conduct (published on the 'Councillor Conduct' section of the Council's website);
- **Standards Committee Complaint Assessment Procedure** for the local assessment (and review where necessary) of complaints that Members may have breached the Code (published on the 'Councillor Conduct' section of the Council's website);
- **Interim Standards Committee Complaint Investigation Procedure** for the local investigation of complaints that Members may have breached the Code (published on the 'Councillor Conduct' section of the Council's website);
- **Interim Standards Committee Complaint Determination Procedure** for the consideration of investigation reports and local determination of complaints that Members may have breached the Code (on the 'Councillor Conduct' section of the Council's website);
- Standards Committee **Dispensation Request Procedure** (available from the Monitoring Officer);
- A webpage on the Council's website re '**How to complain about a Member**';
- **Frequently Asked Questions** regarding the ethical framework on the Council's website;
- Information on the Council's website about **Standards for England**, the national regulator of the standards regime;
- Information on the Council's website about **the Adjudication Panel for England**;
- **Protocol for Member/Officer Relations** (in Part 5 of the Constitution);
- **Guidance Note for Councillors and Officers on Outside Bodies** (in Part 5 of the Constitution);
- **Protocol on Defined Roles of Chief Executive Officer and Leader** (in Part 5 of the Constitution and published on the 'Councillor Conduct' section of the Council's website);
- **Information on the Monitoring Officer role** (in Article 12 and Schedule 4 to Part 3 of the Constitution);
- **Register of Members Interests** (including gifts and hospitality):
  - Hard copy Register maintained by Monitoring Officer;
  - Online version of Register ([Homepage](#) / [Council and democracy / Councillors](#) / Register of members' interests - <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=8066>)
- **Standards Statements:** on the recommendation of the Standards Committee, the following statements regarding ethical issues have been agreed:
  - Chief Executive Officer and Leader general ethics statement;

- Council's statement re standards;
- Council's ethical statement for stakeholders;
- Statement re role of senior managers in ethical framework.

and the Committee receives annual update reports as to the use made of the statements.

- **Ethical Audit**; This comprehensive audit was undertaken in 2006 and the findings formed much of the basis of the Committee's workload for the last three years.
- **Annual Report** of Standards Committee;
- Annual Standards **Training Plan**;
- Standards Committee **Standards Bulletins**;
- Standards Committee **Work Programme**;

The Council also has an Officer Code of Conduct and Officer Register of Interests for Officers at Grade Band 12 and above.

3.3 External standards documentation: additional information and guidance documentation can be found on the Standards for England's and the Adjudication Panel for England's websites. They are constantly being updated but examples are:

- **Standards for England** website ([www.standardsforengland.gov.uk](http://www.standardsforengland.gov.uk)):
  - Information about **making a complaint** under the Code of Conduct for Members;
  - **National Code of Conduct for Members**;
  - **SFE Guidance on Members' Code of Conduct**;
  - **SFE Pocket Guide** to the Code;
  - **Legislative Framework**;
  - **The Case Reviews**;
  - **Standards for England Bulletins**;
  - **SFE Guidance on the Role and Make Up of Standards Committees**;
  - **SFE Guidance on Dispensations**;
  - **SFE Guidance on the Local Assessment of Complaints** (along with a **Toolkit** of precedent documentation);
  - **SFE Guidance on How to Conduct an Investigation** (along with a **Toolkit** of precedent documentation);
  - **SFE Guidance on Local Investigations and Other Action**;
  - **SFE Guidance on Other Action**;
  - **SFE Guidance on Local Determinations** (along with a **Toolkit** of precedent documentation);
  - **SFE Guidance on Joint Standards Committees**;

- **SFE Statement about power to suspend assessment and review functions;**
- **Occasional Paper:** Predisposition, Predetermination or Bias, and the Code;
- **SFE Factsheets;**
- **SFE Frequently Asked Questions;**
- **SFE Training Materials;**
- **SFE Statistical Information;**
- **The Adjudication Panel for England** website (<http://www.adjudicationpanel.tribunals.gov.uk/>):
  - Information about **hearings and decisions;**
  - **Forms** and **Guidance.**

#### **4.0 NATIONAL EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

- 4.1 Standards for England has published on its web site examples of good practice among authorities nationally. The examples are attached for Members' information at Appendix 2 to this report. Members will see that the Council is already following many of these good practices. Other examples which could be considered for work or adoption in future are as follows:
- a) Engaging further with the local media to promote the work of the Standards Committee and the importance of the ethical framework. In one authority the Chairman of the Committee was actively involved in producing a press article to achieve this.
  - b) Publishing the Standards Bulletin on the Council's website.
  - c) Taking opportunities to promote good ethical behaviour as part of the authority's culture.
  - d) A Standards slogan to help engage staff. This could be used on the intranet to alert staff to ethical information.
  - e) Monitoring and seeking to influence policies to help embed high ethical standards and good governance.
  - f) Provide e learning opportunities for officers and members on ethical Standards.
  - g) Working with other authorities and net working groups to share good practice and where possible reduce the duplication of work.
  - h) Maintain close relationships with the Audit Committee.
  - i) Produce a conveniently accessible ethical handbook for Members.
  - j) Produce a Code of Conduct flow chart to assist Members in applying the Code to situations which arise.
  - k) Ensure significant partners have a Code of Conduct reflecting similar principles.

## **5.0 Other Good Practice Measures**

- 5.1 From the Annual return to Standards for England about the activities of the Committee and standards within the Authority it is possible to identify areas where further work could be done or further ideas implemented. These include the following:
- a) Further publicise the Annual report of the Committee by putting it on the web site, and directly circulating to senior officers and posting on the website.
  - b) Monitor behaviour when the Council is working in partnership with other bodies.
  - c) Through a survey monitor the training Members have had on the ethical framework and identify needs.
  - d) Reaffirm arrangements for attendance at the Committee periodically of the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, as well as Leaders of the political groups, and the relevant portfolio holder, and develop an agenda for such meetings.
  - e) Seek feedback from those involved in a complaint process as to their satisfaction with the process.
- 5.2 Members are requested to consider the above measures with a view to some or all being further developed for implementation by the Committee and/or the Council.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 To consider the contents of this report and determine whether any of the good practice measures identified, or any others, should be developed through the Committee's work plan.

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

### Background Documents:

Standards for England website at [www.standardsforengland.gov.uk](http://www.standardsforengland.gov.uk)  
Annual return to Standards for England 2009

County Hall  
NORTHALLERTON

14 September 2009

Final version  
as submitted  
15-05-09.



# Annual return

## Annual return submitted successfully

---

Thank you for completing your annual return. We may contact you by email or telephone if we have any questions about the information you have provided.

For more information about what the Standards Board will do with your annual return information please click [here](#).

Your information was submitted to the Standards Board successfully on 15/05/2009 at 11:16.

[Return to contents](#)





Friday 15 May 2009



Confidence in local democracy

## Annual return

Submitted As Final

### Summary

			show all 
<b><u>Section 1</u></b>	Independent overview		show 
<b><u>Section 2</u></b>	Standards committee - annual report		show 
<b><u>Section 3</u></b>	Standards committee - promoting standards		show 
<b><u>Section 4</u></b>	Standards committee - training		show 
<b><u>Section 5</u></b>	Leadership		show 
<b><u>Section 6</u></b>	Complaints		show 
<b><u>Section 7</u></b>	Member officer - relations		show 
<b><u>Section 8</u></b>	Registering member interests		show 
<b><u>Section 9</u></b>	Officer conduct		show 
<b><u>Section 10</u></b>	Optional questions		show 



## Independent overview

Does the standards committee have Terms of Reference?

Yes

What help do members receive on following the Code of Conduct?

The Committee has ensured the continued embedding of the Code of Conduct within the Council. This has involved the Committee in delivering training to Members and in the production, review and dissemination of other information to Members (eg a revised supporting Guidance Protocol on the Code, a new Protocol regarding Gifts and Hospitality, revised Guidance for Members serving on Outside Bodies, a revised Protocol for Member/Officer Relations and a summary of the Standards Board Case Review 2007) to ensure continued awareness of developments. The Committee also produces a Standards Bulletin throughout the year (three or four). The Council as a whole has agreed statements in relation to its stance, and that of leading officers and Members, and senior officers on ethical standards thus assisting in adding to general awareness. References to the Code are in the course of being integrated within the Council's Equalities, Data Protection and Freedom of Information policies. The Monitoring Officer provides advice to Members as necessary in relation to Code of Conduct issues.

Does the standards committee have a forward work plan?

Yes

If yes, who outside of the standards committee is involved in agreeing the forward work plan? Please explain below.

The Committee itself largely determines its work plan. However, the Council's Ethical Audit in 2005/6 produced a detailed Action Plan (reviewed annually) which continues to inform the Committee's Work Programme. The Monitoring Officer and her team provide support to the Standards Committee on all aspects of its work and forward work planning. There is also from time to time input from the Council's Audit Committee where areas of work overlap.

Is the standards committee given a role in reviewing amendments to the Authority's Constitution (or Standing Orders where appropriate)?

Yes

If yes, when was the last review undertaken and what was the standards committee's role in the review? Please explain below.

Under its Terms of Reference, the Standards Committee has the power to advise the Council on any amendments to its Constitution which might be desirable in the light of issues concerned with ethics and conduct. The Standards Committee will have an opportunity to participate in any future formal review of the whole Constitution. In the meantime, it does recommend to full Council any ad hoc constitutional amendments required relating to the standards regime eg: - the amendment of its Terms of Reference - the Standards Committee's own explanatory Article - sections of the Constitution relating to the Monitoring Officer's role in relation to the standards regime - Section 5 of the Constitution relating to various Codes and Protocols eg: • Members' Code of Conduct • Council's supporting Guidance Protocol on Code of Conduct • Officers' Code of Conduct • Protocol on Member/Employee Relations • Guidance to Officers and Members re Outside Bodies • Recommendations to the Independent Remuneration Panel regarding the Members' Allowances Scheme published in the Constitution, relating to the withholding of allowances where a Member is suspended under the standards regime.

## **Standards committee meetings.**

Please use the table below to indicate how many times between 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2009 the standards committee has met and for what reasons.

<b>Reason for meeting</b>	<b>Number of times met between 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2009</b>
General meeting of whole standards committee	4
Training	2
Assessment sub-committee	1
Review sub-committee	1
Consideration meeting	0
Hearing	0
Other	0



### **Standards committee - annual report**

Does the standards committee produce an annual report on its own work?

Yes

Is the annual report received by a meeting of the full authority?

Yes

Is the annual report sent to all members?

Yes

Is the annual report sent to all senior officers?

Yes

How is the annual report publicised to the general public?

The Annual Report is published via publication of the relevant Standards Committee report and minutes (recommending the report for circulation to full Council), on the Council's website. Similarly, the Report is also published via publication of the relevant Council report and minutes (considering the Report) on the Council's website.



### **Standards committee - promoting standards**

What else does the standards committee do to communicate the role of the standards committee and the importance of high standards internally within the authority to members and officers?

The Standards Committee takes a broad view of its role in promoting, both externally and internally, the value of high standards, supported by the Monitoring Officer and, above all, by the strong commitment from the Council Leader, Chief Executive, political Group Leaders and the way in which Members conduct themselves. Achieving reasonable ethical performance is not enough: the Committee tries to continually improve and communicate the Council's ethical objectives internally and to the wider public. Regular measurement of progress is therefore essential. The Committee has its own Communications Strategy setting out how it will promote its work both internally and externally. Alongside the Standards Committee, the Audit Committee is also responsible for monitoring general governance issues within the authority. The two Committees liaise on issues of common interest (eg the Local Code of Corporate Governance). The present Standards Committee Chairman is co-opted onto the Audit Committee. In addition to the matters mentioned elsewhere in this Return, the Committee has communicated its role internally as follows: The preparation and use of various Council statements (e.g. for senior Managers) regarding standards issues. An article on ethical conduct and the new local standards regime included in the June 2008 edition of the staff newsletter, which reaches all staff via their payslips. The presentation of the Committee's Annual Report to Council. This assists in raising the profile of the Committee and ethical standards generally. Production of the Council's Standards Bulletin, an internal newsletter produced three/four times each year, containing information about standards developments, and circulated to all Members, co-optees and senior Officers. Standards Committee members participated this year in training to council officers on decision making and the ethical standards regime.

What else has the standards committee done to promote confidence in local democracy to the wider public?

In 2007, following the publication of an article on ethical standards in the Council's newspaper, NY Times, awareness of standards issues was tested, via a questionnaire, through the Citizens' Panel (a panel of around 2000 residents consulted four times per year on a range of service issues); In August 2008, NY Times included an A-Z guide to Council services, containing contact details for "Ethical Standards and Monitoring Officer". A NY Times' advert for a new Standards Committee independent Member was accompanied by a standards article. The statements of the Council's stance in relation to ethical standards are on the council's web site.

Has the authority, or the standards committee in particular, considered how it will monitor and ensure high standards of behaviour when the authority is working in partnership with other organisations?

Yes

Please provide examples.

The Committee's approach is that high ethical standards are an essential foundation to providing good, efficient Council services; and, further, that high ethical standards should embrace the ethos of the whole organisation, the way Members and Officers behave towards each other, to the public, to suppliers and partners. It is important that the Council should give clear a clear message about its stance re standards and those it expects from others: to that end, the Council has agreed various ethics statements, including one for stakeholders, requiring high standards of conduct from those with whom the Council works. The ethical statement for stakeholders is published on the Council's website and Intranet and has been incorporated into work practices: it has been included in the Council's Procurement Manual and in some of the procurement precedent documentation. References to standards are also being incorporated in the Council's Whistleblowing Policy, Anti-Money Laundering Policy and other elements of the Counter Fraud Strategy. The Council requires contractors and their employees to be aware of these issues. All procurement champions within the Council are required to disseminate information about the Procurement Manual within their Directorates, including the contents of the Procurement Manual, and they are regularly updated about changes.



### **Standards committee - training**

Between 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2009, has the authority assessed the training and development needs of members in relation to their responsibilities on standards of conduct?

Yes

What training needs were identified?

General training on developments in the ethical framework. For Standards Committee Members training on the local handling of complaints. The need for training in relation to standards to be included in the induction programme for new members of the Council following the elections in 2009.

Please provide a list of training and development opportunities that have been provided to members and officers in the period from 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2009, that are relevant to ensuring high standards. Your list should include any training that relates to the operation of the local standards framework, e.g. local assessment, hearings etc.

Training delivered to Council members in June 2008 in relation to developments in the ethical framework. Training to Standards Committee Complaints and Assessment and Review Sub - Committees on their role in February and March 2009. Officer training on standards and decision making in October 2008 and two repeat sessions.



### **Leadership**

How often has the standards committee, or its chair, met the chief executive to discuss ethical issues in the last 12 months (from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009)?

None

Please also provide an overview of what the meetings were about.

No formal meetings have taken place though the Chair of the Standards Committee and Chief Executive meet informally from time to time. The Monitoring Officer always attends Standards Committee and briefs the Chief Executive on Standards Committee and ethical framework developments as a standing item in their monthly meetings. Then Chief Executive is scheduled to attend a meeting of the Committee in November 2009.

How often has the standards committee, or its chair, met the leader of the council to discuss ethical issues in the last 12 months (from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009)?

None

Please also provide an overview of what the meetings were about.

No formal meetings in the last twelve months but the Leader does attend Standards Committee from time to time and is due to attend in the near future.

How often has the standards committee, or its chair, met the other party group leaders to discuss ethical issues in the last

12 months (from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009)?

None

Please also provide an overview of what the meetings were about.

Does the standards committee, or its chair, have regular access to the monitoring officer? How regular?

The Monitoring Officer operates an open door policy and Standards Committee Members are able to contact her in person, by telephone or email as they feel the need. In between Standards Committee meetings, Members are kept informed of any key standards developments and there is frequent liaison between the Committee Members, particularly the Chairman, and the Monitoring Officer and her team regarding standards issues. Prior to each Standards Committee meeting, the Monitoring Officer holds a pre-meeting with the Chair of the Committee.

How many times in the last 12 months (from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009) has the standards committee chair been invited to address a full authority meeting?

One

Does the monitoring officer sit on the Corporate Management Team, or equivalent?

Yes

Has an executive member (or senior member where appropriate) been given portfolio responsibility for standards?

Yes



**Complaints**

Can the public access information, from the authority website, about how to make a complaint against a member?

Yes

What else has the authority done to advertise the complaint process on member conduct to the general public?

The Council's Complaints leaflet contains information about making a complaint against Members in relation to the Code of Conduct. An article has been included in the Council's newspaper the NY Times advising the public of how to make a complaint.

Has the authority sought feedback from any of those people involved in an allegation of member misconduct about their satisfaction with the member conduct complaint process (for example the complainant, witnesses or person against whom the allegation was made)? Please choose from responses below.

No. have not sought feedback

How does the authority communicate the outcome of investigations into member conduct to:

a) members

No investigations have taken place. In the event of an investigation taking place, notification will be made in accordance with relevant Guidance and statutory requirements.

b) officers

See above

c) the general public

See above

How does the authority communicate the outcome of allegations into member conduct which have NOT resulted in an investigation (for example those allegations which have not been referred for investigation and those allegations which have resulted in other action) to:

a) members

Only one assessment has taken place to date (only one complaint received). It is proposed to report the fact that one complaint has gone through the complaint assessment and review procedure to the Standards Committee as part of its review of the incidence of complaints. Otherwise notification is made in accordance with the legislation and guidance.

**b) officers**

See above.

**c) the general public**

See above.



### **Member officer relations**

**Does the authority have a protocol for relations between members and officers?**

Yes

**How is the protocol communicated to officers and members?**

The Protocol is included in the Council's Constitution which exists in hard copy and is also published on the Council's website. It has also been the subject of training sessions for Officers.

**What is the mechanism for reviewing the effectiveness of this protocol?**

The Protocol is periodically reviewed by the Standards Committee, as part of its Work Programme, with support from the Monitoring Officer.

**Does the authority include training on the importance of high standards of behaviour in the inductions of new members and officers?**

Yes

**Does the authority have informal mechanisms for dealing with member/officer and member/member disputes?**

Yes

**Please provide details of any mechanisms and, if possible, provide an example where this has been used.**

The Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and other very senior officers are involved from time to time in the resolution of minor disputes informally between officers and members. If necessary the Chief Executive would also discuss with the Leader or Group Leaders how issues should be resolved.



### **Registering member interests**

**Is the member register of interests accessible to the public on the authority website?**

Yes

**Is the register of gifts and hospitality available to the public on the authority website?**

Yes

**What does the authority do to signal to members the importance of declaring interests and completing the register of interests and the register of gifts and hospitality?**

Periodically by training. The Monitoring Officer also gives advice regularly to members and proactively advises where appropriate.


---

**Officer conduct**

Does the authority have a code of conduct for senior officers?

Yes

Does the authority compile a register of senior officers' interests?

Yes

If yes, is the register of senior officers' interests available to the public on the authority website?

No.

Does the authority compile a register of senior officers' gifts and hospitality?

Yes

If yes, is the senior officers' register of gifts and hospitality available to the public on the authority website?

No


---

**Optional questions**

The following questions are optional; you do not have to complete them if you do not wish to. However, this information would be useful to us in helping us to raise ethical standards.

On what issues, if any, would you appreciate more support or guidance on from the Standards Board for England?

The Standards Board for England, the Improvement and Development Agency and the Audit Commission have developed a toolkit that authorities can use to assess the ethical governance arrangements in their authority, and also to identify improvements.

Has your authority used the ethical governance toolkit?

Yes


---

**The Standards Board for England © 2008**

## Appendix 2

### Standards For England - Examples of Good Practice

#### 1. Engaging leadership

Strong leaders that engage with council staff and the local government community are an asset to local authorities. Here are some examples of how local authority staff and standards committee members have proactively championed high ethical standards

- **Rossendale Borough Council** has an engaged chief executive and council leader who champion standards at the authority. They have also worked closely with the Audit Commission to develop an experience based learning approach to ethical conduct.
- **Newark and Sherwood District Council** has a very proactive monitoring officer, Kirsty Cole, who regularly speaks at different events and has a national profile in the standards committee. This has enabled Kirsty to share her experience and knowledge at events both locally, regionally and nationally, in training IDeA peers on Code of Conduct and ethical governance issues and undertaking work as an IDeA peer undertaking ethical governance reviews.
- **Rossendale Borough Council's** standards committee monitor current policies and proactively seek to influence and develop new policies, which helps to embed high ethical standards and good governance.
- **Leeds City Council's** standards committee produce an annual report that is reported to the full council. The standards committee also has a forward work plan, which is kept under review by officers with reference to national developments.
- **Rossendale Borough Council** has appointed lead officers to act as 'Governance Champions' to promote high standards and advise on issues such as contract procedures, their gifts and hospitality policy and whistle-blowing.

#### 2. Training and skills for members

All six shortlisted authorities have good, regular training programmes for councillors and standard committee members. Some councils have even made Code of Conduct training compulsory for district councillors. The six shortlisted councils have a clear work programme for their standards committee - going beyond complaints and probity to cover a wider remit.

- **Rossendale Borough Council** are focused on member development and have worked with the IDeA on a learning programme. All their councillors also have a personal development plan.
- Some councils ensure their members receive media and presentation skills so they are well equipped to deal with the local media's questions.
- **Leeds City Council** develop training in formats tailored to their members needs and now provide e-learning courses for councillors to

give them extra guidance on the Code of Conduct. Their standards committee review the decisions of the APE and consider any lessons the council could learn.

- **Newark and Sherwood District Council** worked with the [Local Government Training Unit](#) and with qualified mediators to develop a course on mediation, which was attended by over 50 delegates from all over England and Wales.
- **Leeds City Council** has provided all their parish councillors with access to a new online training system from the IDeA called 'Modern Councillor'.
- As part of **Rossendale Borough Council's** standards committee's commitment to learning and development; at every meeting members consider a real-life case study of standards issues from another authority to discuss what can be learned from the situation and applied in Rossendale.
- **Rossendale Borough Council's** councillors serving on Development Control or Licensing Committee must receive training before taking up their position so that they are aware of protocols, policies and regulations governing these meetings.
- **Newark and Sherwood District Council** has developed a recruitment pack for the appointment of independent members containing a job description, person specification, advertisement and guidance on legislative requirements. A copy of this is referenced on [ACSeS' website](#).

### 3. Communicating with staff and stakeholders

Research shows that local authority staff who feel well informed and have a say are more likely to feel involved in and positive about their organisation (IDeA). It is important that councils give a clear message about their stance on standards and what it expects from others -

- **Leeds City Council** has developed an internal newsletter called '[Governance matters](#)' which promotes ethical and corporate governance issues and details the work of their standards committee.
- **Leeds City Council** has identified good ethical behaviour as part of the organisations overall [aspirational culture](#)
- **Rossendale Borough Council** has their own slogan 'Serious about standards' which helps to engage staff.
- Councils can hold events to engage their members and council officers and keep them up-to-date with what the authority is doing to maintain high standards. For example, some councils host clerk forums that are regular meetings between council officers and town and parish clerks.
- **Lincolnshire County Council** produce standards committee annual reports that outline the members of the committee, what they do, their work programme and the numbers of complaints and policies they've considered.
- **Newcastle City Council** has used their internal staff information bulletin to draw staff attention to the code of conduct for members and the work of the Committee.



- Some councils agree various ethics statements that are used in publicity and in engagement with the public and other stakeholders.
- **Rossendale Borough Council's** standards issues are reinforced through the corporate Team Briefing, in their staff newsletter 'Grapevine' and through specific information booklets on whistleblowing and their gifts and hospitality Policy.

#### 4. Increasing confidence in democracy

Good communication is essential to let the public know what you do and how you do it. Research shows that the top performing councils are effective at informing the public about the services they provide. Good examples of this have been using the recruitment of independent members to promote the standards committees' role and what they hope to achieve

- **Waveney District Council's** standards committee are calling on budding young filmmakers to help them raise awareness of their work. The Waveney Young Filmmaker competition gives young people a great opportunity to showcase their creative talents. The winning film will bring a new perspective to the work of the standards committee giving them a fresh way to promote ethical governance to the local community. Caroline Nixon, Chairman of the standards committee, encourages young filmmakers to get involved: "The Waveney Young Filmmaker Competition offers young people from across Waveney the opportunity to submit their films and have them judged by a panel, including industry professionals. Whether you are a first-time filmmaker or developing your skills, the competition is a fantastic opportunity for budding filmmakers to garner approval for their work and add valuable material to their portfolio. Their original idea will also be shown on the Waveney District Council website". For more information on the competition, visit the [Waveney District Council website](#).
- **Newcastle City Council** made sure they promoted the changes to the complaints system with a number of articles in their [residents newsletter](#). This newsletter also included an article written by the standards committee Chair to promote the role of the standards committee.
- **Leeds City Council's** standards committee has their own communications plan covering members, parishes and the public.
- **Newark and Sherwood District Council** promotes the role of their standards committee to the local media and in their community newsletter.
- **Colchester Borough Council** held an '[I'm a Councillor get me out of here](#)' event that aimed to get young people and councillors talking. This involved a number of schools in the Colchester area.
- The chairman of **Ceredigion County Council's** standards committee took an active role in highlighting the role of the committee, the importance of the Code and the integral role of independent members in a local press article.
- **Rossendale Borough Council** host an annual Local Democracy Week, which aims to help young people understand more about their

council and local democracy. Primary schools tour the Council Chamber, discuss council services and learn about the role of the Mayor and Councillors. Secondary school pupils also take part in a 'Question Time' event to pose challenging queries to local councillors and community leaders.

- **Rossendale Borough Council** has also produced a [Standards bulletin](#) that is published on their website so that local people and partners can be assured of the correct conduct of the council.
- **Lincolnshire County Council** is one of the few councils providing live webcasts of council meetings with an archive on their website.

## 5. Working in partnerships with other authorities

A commitment to partnerships and joint working allows authorities to share experience, knowledge and resources. Here's some examples of how the six shortlisted authorities have collaborated with different organisations and partners.

- **Ceredigion County Council** hosted the Welsh Standards Conference with Wales ACSeS Group at Aberystwyth University for monitoring officers and standards committee members to share their experiences of the new Code. The Council is also developing close links with the University and the Monitoring Officer will shortly be providing a talk to law students in the University in relation to legal careers in local government.
- **Rossendale Borough Council** advises Burnley Borough Council on their protocols and work for the standards committee.
- **Newark and Sherwood District Council** provide best practice, advice and support to other authorities via Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire standards forums, monitoring officer groups and the organisation of an annual Monitoring Officers' conference.
- **Newcastle City Council** standards committee has built a proactive relationship with chief whips.
- **Newark and Sherwood District Councils** monitoring officer has been proactive in leading a Nottinghamshire Monitoring Officers Group which meets regularly to discuss ethics and standards and to share learning and knowledge. As a result, the Nottinghamshire districts have developed common procedures and protocols for dealing with standards complaints.
- **Rossendale Borough Council's** proposals for a Joint Standards Committee with other councils will provide increased capacity and make it easier to avoid any conflicts of interest. This will create a stronger support and advisory function which can draw on its collective experience to promote greater consistency in procedures and decisions.
- **Ceredigion County Council** produced a [flow chart](#) to assist with training for councillors, which has been distributed to all monitoring officers in Wales.

- **Leeds City Council's** standards committee maintain a close relationship with the Corporate Governance and Audit committee (CGA) and send them a progress report every six months.
- **Newark and Sherwood District Council** adopted a deliberate policy to share their learning and best practice not just locally, but regionally and nationally.
- **Nottinghamshire Monitoring Officer Group** identified a particular problem in respect of the understanding of governance issues within parishes and responded to this by developing the '[Parish Council Toolkit](#)'. All parish councils in Newark and Sherwood District Council have received a copy and many have adopted its model procedures. This has been welcomed by the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC) who is working closely with the group to produce version three of the toolkit.