

## NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE

10 May 2010

#### **Local Government Chronicle Awards 2010**

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

- 1.1 To inform Members of the outcome of the Local Government Chronicle Awards' 'Standards and Ethics' Category 2010.

#### **2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 This year, six local authorities were shortlisted for the Standards and Ethics Category of the Local Government Chronicle Awards. All those shortlisted were said by the judges to have shown a "dynamic approach to improving and promoting ethical standards among members and helping to boost public confidence in local democracy."
- 2.2 On 25 March 2010, Leeds City Council was announced as the winner of this category and Waveney District Council was highly commended by the judges.
- 2.3 Set out below are key aspects of both authorities' applications that were favoured by the judges.

#### **3.0 LEEDS CITY COUNCIL**

- 3.1 Standards for England, which supports the award, were impressed by Leeds City Council's overall approach to ethical governance and commitment to high ethical standards within the authority. They were said to have demonstrated innovation and hard work in areas such as communicating standards and engaging leadership.
- 3.2 The authority's 'From Good to Great' plan outlined a series of measures designed to raise awareness of ethical standards. These included working on the standards committee's assessment and investigation procedures.
- 3.3 The authority found that investigations were taking too long so took their lead from the First Tier Tribunal, using standards committee cases which had been overturned as examples to inform their own processes.
- 3.4 The Chairman of Leeds City Council's Standards Committee meets with the Monitoring Officer and the leaders of all political parties once per quarter to keep them informed of developments in standards and ethics and to hear any comments they have. Comments are then fed back to the Standards Committee. It is found in Leeds that this approach allows the Chairman to respond to any Members who may not fully understand the standards process and to reassure them that ethical standards needn't be "challenging or scary".
- 3.5 The Chairman of the Standards Committee stressed the importance of building a relationship between the standards committee and political leaders, to avoid misunderstandings. He also stressed that the Committee wants to emphasise

that it is not there to impose itself on people, but to establish high ethical standards

- 3.6 To reinforce this message, Independent Members of the Standards Committee have been joining elected Members for their councillor surgeries. This provides an opportunity to meet with the public and “enhance their understanding of the role of the councillors”.
- 3.7 Key messages of the Standards Committee have been published on Leeds City Council’s website, with efforts being made for these messages to also get to people who do not have access to the internet.
- 3.8 The authority has also carried out an internal survey into ethical standards with officers and members, which has now been integrated into their induction and training processes.

#### **4.0 WAVENEY DISTRICT COUNCIL**

- 4.1 Waveney District Council was highly commended in the Awards. The judges acknowledged the work carried out by the authority in promoting its existence to members of the public. It was felt by the authority that the public needed more information about the purpose and role of the standards committee to raise awareness of its work.
- 4.2 Waveney DC targeted parish and town councils with copies of the Code of Conduct to promote awareness. Copies of the Code were distributed to both parish councillors and members of the public to help keep people informed. Training on the Code was given to parish councils from the Chair and Members of the Standards Committee, especially in relation to personal and prejudicial interests.
- 4.3 The authority also promoted initiatives that were directed at the younger population of the District, believing strongly that “standards should be understood and contributed to by a range of age groups.” The aim of the authority’s initiatives were “to encourage younger people to engage in and develop an understanding of standards and ethics in the democratic environment”. To this end, a poster competition was held, with the winning entry coming from Lowestoft College. The ‘We Pledge’ posters based on the Ten General Principles of Public Life were publicised throughout the district and formed a central part of a wider ethical governance campaign.
- 4.4 Waveney DC also created the ‘Young Filmmaker Competition’, which appealed to local young people to produce a film which would promote standards. The winning entry was from a girl who had her friends act out a scenario regarding discrimination and was published on the authority’s website. In addition, the film will be used by the authority as a resource for newly-elected member inductions.

#### **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 That Members note this report.

Background Documents:

[www.standardsforengland.gov.uk](http://www.standardsforengland.gov.uk)

[www.leeds.gov.uk](http://www.leeds.gov.uk)

[www.waveley.gov.uk](http://www.waveley.gov.uk)

[www.lgcplus.com](http://www.lgcplus.com)

County Hall  
NORTHALLERTON

27 April 2010