

## NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE

13 September 2010

#### Update re use of standards statements

#### **1.0 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**

**JOHN MARSDEN**

***Leader of the Council***

***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 have been informed in previous update reports 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 precedent procurement documentation.
- 3.3 Consideration is also being given by officers as to further ways the standards of behaviour expected of all those working in partnership with the authority can be incorporated within the Council's partnership governance documentation and processes, for example incorporating reference to the ethical framework in the Council's Partnership Working Guidance document.
- 3.4 Members will be kept informed of developments.

#### **Council's statement re standards**

- 3.5 This statement is periodically published in the Council's weekly email newsletter 'Key Messages'.
- 3.6 It was previously published at the start of the 'Councillor Conduct' page on the website but no longer appears following the last update of the standards web-pages. The Monitoring Officer will arrange for its re-publication on the website as soon as possible.
- 3.7 The general Council statement was also submitted for inclusion at the beginning of the introductory page for the Officers' E-Induction facility.

- 3.8 The first part of this statement is also included in the introduction to the Council intranet 'Conduct and disciplinary' page (the aim of which is to help to maintain the required standards of officer conduct and behaviour throughout the Council, and to ensure that any disciplinary action required is applied consistently and fairly).
- 3.9 The first part of the statement will be included in the Introduction to the Corporate Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure, which is currently under review. The Procedure also sets out that reports on Corporate Compliments, Comments and Complaints received are reported to Management Board and to the Standards Committee (which raises the profile of the Committee) and provides a link to the Officers' Standards of Conduct Procedure.
- 3.10 Further, the general Council statement also appears at the beginning of the Committee's new Complaint Feedback Questionnaire, which is the subject of a separate report to the Committee's meeting.

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

- 3.11 The Council's standards statement for senior managers appears at the beginning of the standards page on the Council's Intranet regarding 'Conduct and Disciplinary' (found under 'C' in the A-Z Index).
- 3.12 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**

- 3.13 This statement has, on more than one occasion, been used as a Foreword to the Standards Bulletin, most recently in the edition of the Bulletin following the elections in June last year.
- 3.14 The statement also appears on the 'Code of Conduct' web-page on the Council's website, accessible via the "Councillors, democracy and elections" web-page. There is also a separate web-page relating to 'The Role of the Leader and Chief Executive Officer within the ethical framework' which contains the Defined Roles Protocol re the roles of the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive Officer in relation to the ethical framework.
- 3.15 Members will note that the Leader and Chief Executive Officer both signed up to this joint standards statement in their own names when the statement was introduced; given the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer since the adoption of the statement, the Monitoring Officer will seek the new Chief Executive Officer's endorsement of the statement.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 Members will note that there has been further progress in promoting the standards statements. Further opportunities for their use are likely to arise following the expected abolition of the current standards regime and any future changes to the ethical framework.
- 4.2 The Monitoring Officer will continue to consider new ways in which the standards statements could be used and promoted, and Members will be kept informed of developments.

## **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

25 August 2010