

# Agenda Item 13

Standards Committee

3 November 2009

CEH



## Standards for England – Standards & Ethics- Good Practice

### Summary

The ideas and innovations listed in this report are designed to promote standards and ethics. The ideas and schemes are a selection of those identified best practices of authorities that have been short listed in the past for the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Standards and Ethics Awards, which is supported by the Standards Board for England.

### Recommendation

- 1 that Members consider the areas of development as set out in Table 1.
- 2 that Members note the 2009 annual return survey responses to Standards for England.

### 1 Main Body of the Report

1.1 The following ideas and innovations to promote standards and ethics are a selection of the identified best practices of authorities that have been short listed in the past for the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Standards and Ethics Awards, which is supported by Standards for England. Table 1 identifies potentially new practices or improvements used by those Councils short listed. These practices are stated to have worked well for the authorities concerned and the Standards Committee are asked to consider these and any other ideas they might have that could help promote standards and ethics within the council or the work done by the Standards Committee.

**Table 1**

Area of work	Council	EDDC Comment
<b>Training &amp; Skills</b>  Providing Parish Councillors with access to a new online training system (Leeds City Council); Electronic learning courses for Councillors on the Code of Conduct	Leeds City Council	EDDC website already provides some key information for Parishes and members.  There is potential to develop electronic-learning, but there would be a resource implication to explore.
<b>Communicating with staff and stakeholders</b>  An internal newsletter called 'governance matters' detailing the work of the Standards Committee (Leeds City Council);  The slogan 'serious about standards' has been developed to help engage with staff	Leeds City Council  Rossendale Borough Council.	The Council produce a weekly newsletter for members called 'Knowledge' This publication could include the work of the Standards Committee with minimal resource implications  Committee could adopt this, or a similar one.

Area of work	Council	EDDC Comment
<p><b>Increasing confidence in local democracy</b></p> <p>Promotes the role of the Standards Committee through their local media</p> <p>Standards bulletins are published on their website (Rossendale Borough Council);</p> <p>Live web casts of council meetings (Lincolnshire County Council);</p> <p>Pen pictures of Standards Committee members could be placed in the annual report or other documentation promoting the work of the Standards Committee.</p>	<p>Newark and Sherwood District Council</p>	<p>Press releases at EDDC are handled as and when a decision or initiative is judged to be newsworthy. There is always a danger that 'press saturation' can desensitise the public.</p> <p>A web page for the Standards Committee could be developed.</p>
<p><b>Increasing confidence in local democracy (continued)</b></p> <p>A young filmmaker competition took place to help raise awareness of the Standards Committee's work</p> <p>The Chair of the Standards Committee wrote an article on the role of the committee, the Code and independent members for the local press</p> <p>An 'I'm a Councillor get me out of here' event was held to get young people and Councillors talking</p>	<p>Waveney District Council</p> <p>Ceredigion County Council</p> <p>Colchester Borough Council</p>	<p>The Democratic Services team carry out several events throughout the year to encourage young people in particular, to embrace the idea of democracy. This initiative could be expanded to include the standards agenda more explicitly.</p>
<p><b>Working in partnership with other authorities</b></p> <p>Adopted a deliberate policy to share learning and best practice regionally and nationally</p> <p>Development of a 'Parish Council Toolkit' with many adopting its model procedures</p>	<p>Newark &amp; Sherwood District Council</p>	<p>We do work with neighbouring councils and share reports, procedures and training sessions where we can. The Deputy MO is also a member of the AcSes network (Association of Council Solicitors and Secretaries) which aims to share good practice.</p>

1.2 Also attached for Member's discussion is the 'Standards for England: Annual return responses 2009'. This survey summary includes all responses from authorities about their Standards Committees and activity in 2009 to date.

**Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications to report.

**Financial Implications**

The financial implications are difficult to identify at this stage but there may be some cost to the first two ideas in the table.

**Background papers**

Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Standards and Ethics Awards website  
Standards for England: Annual return responses 2009

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