



Annual Return form - 2010

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PART 1: COMMUNICATION

Annual Report

Does the standards committee produce an annual report?

Yes

What does the report contain?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A personal statement by the standards committee chairman | <input type="checkbox"/> Information about the members of the standards committee |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The role of the standards committee | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The standards committee terms of reference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information about the Code of Conduct | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statistical information about complaints that have been received |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information about the length of time taken dealing with complaints | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A summary of complaints which have led to investigation, sanction or other action |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Details about training/events provided | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The forward work plan of the standards committee |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Please describe what "Other" contents are in the report.

An overview of the Committee's activities, including information about: presentations on ethical governance; compliments and complaints; a quarterly newsletter; guidance provided on disclosure of confidential information; consultation on changes to codes of conduct; annual letter from Local Government Ombudsman; a complaint to LGO; local partnerships and citizen redress; Annual Assembly of Standards Committees; Annual Meeting of Suffolk Standards Committees; examples of good practice; corporate induction for officers. The Annual Report is presented to the full Council by the Chairman of the Standards Committee, and at this point she makes a personal statement to the Council.

How is the standards committee annual report circulated?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sent to all senior officers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sent to all members |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available on the authority intranet | <input type="checkbox"/> Available as a specific item on the authority website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Available in the standards committee papers published on the authority website | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Included as a full authority meeting agenda item |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicised in local press | <input type="checkbox"/> Distributed to households |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Available at authority offices | <input type="checkbox"/> Not circulated outside of the standards committee |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Please describe the "Other" circulation methods.

The draft Annual Report is available as part of the Standards Committee papers published on the authority's website.

Publicising Complaints

How can the public access information about how to make a complaint against a member?

- Through a 'compliments and complaints' type section of the council website
- Through the standards committee section of the website

Complaints leaflets available from the authority

Included as part of a council newsletter

Information is not available to the public

Other

The information is on the "compliments and complaints" type section of the council website, please provide the web address.

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CouncilAndDemocracy/LocalDemocracy/CountyCouncillors/>

Please describe the "Other" places the public can access this information.*

A leaflet produced in common by the County, District and Borough Councils in Suffolk is available at County, District and Borough Council offices and in all libraries in Suffolk. Please note we do not have an authority newsletter.

How can the public access information about the outcome of initial assessment decisions?

Written summary available for public inspection

All initial assessment decisions are publicised in the local press

Publicised in the local press only if the subject member agrees

Assessment decisions published on the authority website

Articles published in the authority newsletter

Other

Please describe the "Other" ways initial assessments are available.

Please note we do not have an authority newsletter.

How can the public access information about the outcome of investigations?

Hearings are open to the public

All investigation outcomes are publicised in the local press

Publicised in the local press only if the subject member agrees

Published on the authority website

Decision notices are available for public inspection

Articles in the authority newsletter

Other

Please describe the "Other" ways investigation outcomes are available.

Please note we do not have an authority newsletter. So far we have only had one hearing. Afterwards we put a notice in the local newspaper, but did not issue a press release. Nevertheless, there was ample press coverage.

Do you have a mechanism in place for measuring the satisfaction of all those involved in allegations of misconduct? For example the member, complainant and witnesses.

No

Communicating the role and work of the standards committee and standards generally

What does the authority do to promote the work of the standards committee and standards generally to the rest of the authority (i.e. internally)?

Dedicated standards committee pages on intranet

Standards committee has its own newsletter / bulletin

Standards committee issues briefing notes

Articles in employee newsletter / bulletin / newspaper

Standards committee independent members observe other authority meetings

Standards committee independent members contribute to other authority meetings

Other

Please give further details of the contributions made to other authority meetings.

The Chairman of the Standards Committee contributes to a County Council meeting when she presents the annual report.

Please describe the "Other" methods used.

The Standards Committee can ask the Monitoring Officer to issue guidance to councillors on specific subjects. Over recent years the Committee has established a programme whereby the Chief Executive, senior officers and people from external organisations have attended the Committee's meetings and spoken about ethical governance. Standards/Code of Conduct forms part of the induction for all new councillors and for the vast majority of new employees.

How can the public access information about your standards committee?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated standards committee section on the authority website | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Within 'council and democracy' type section of website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethical standards issues have been included in the local press / media | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee minutes, agendas, and reports are available to the public |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leaflets and/or posters are placed in public buildings | <input type="checkbox"/> Places articles in the authority newsletter / bulletin / other publication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standards committee meetings are observed by members of the public | <input type="checkbox"/> Information is not available to the public |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Please provide the web address for information within the council and democracy section of your website.

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CouncilAndDemocracy/LocalDemocracy/DecisionMaking/Cor>

Please describe the "Other" ways the public can access this information.

A leaflet produced in common by the County, District and Borough Councils in Suffolk is available at County, District and Borough Council offices and in all libraries in Suffolk. Please note we do not have an authority website.

What else does the authority do to promote the work of the standards committee and standards generally to the public and other partners?

The Standards Committee takes part in an annual meeting with all the Standards Committees and Monitoring Officers in the county, and the Suffolk Monitoring Officers and the Suffolk Association of Local Councils have regular meetings to discuss issues of common interest. The Chief Executive of NHS Suffolk has spoken to the Committee about ethical governance, and in the future it is hoped that the Chief Executive of the Ipswich and Suffolk Committee for Racial Equality will also speak to the Committee. The Standards Committee has been instrumental in establishing a protocol concerning complaint resolution in relation to partnerships.

PART 2: INFLUENCE

How does the standards committee communicate ethical issues to the senior figures within your authority (for example the Chief Executive and Leader of the Authority, Party Leaders)?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Formal meetings between standards committee members and senior figures specifically set up to discuss standards | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal discussion on particular standards issues |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior figure attendance at standards committee meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Officer is a member of or attends Corporate Management Team (or equivalent) meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Executive or senior member has portfolio responsibility for standards | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chair (or other standards committee member) addresses full authority meeting(s) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Describe the "Other" communication methods.

Over recent years the Committee has established a programme whereby the Chief Executive and senior officers have attended the Committee's meetings and spoken about ethical governance. In addition, the Standards Committee (jointly with the Audit Committee) produces a quarterly newsletter covering topical issues. This is circulated to all members and is available on the County Council's intranet. Members of the Standards Committee hold important and influential positions on the Council.

How do the senior figures in your authority demonstrate strong ethical values?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Through a strongly promoted whistle-blowing policy | <input type="checkbox"/> By ensuring there are references to ethics in the authority vision / objectives |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrating appropriate behaviours | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior figure(s) makes personal commitment to standards in statements to public/employees |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through any other method | |

Describe the "Other" ways that this is achieved.

As part of the corporate induction programme senior figures refer to the ethical values of the County Council, and this is also outlined in the Corporate Induction leaflet. Staff also have access to the Standards Committee's newsletter. Senior members of the main political parties sit on the Standards Committee, adding to its authority and raising its profile. Also, senior officers are asked to present their vision of ethical governance to the Committee, thus stimulating debate. Our whistle-blowing policy has recently been refreshed and re-publicised so it will be more strongly promoted in future.

Does your authority have a protocol for partnership working that outlines the standards of behaviour expected of all those working in partnership?

No

What mechanisms does the authority use for dealing with member/officer and/or member/member disputes?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal discussion/mediation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Officer mediation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chair of standards committee mediation | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior figure mediation (e.g. Chief Executive) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advice from Human Resources department | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Solicitor / legal adviser consulted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Informal hearing | <input type="checkbox"/> No mechanisms other than normal complaints process |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Describe the "Other" mechanisms used.

The Council has a Member/Officer Protocol. Party leaders have a role to play in resolving conflicts, and the leaders of the three main political parties have expressed their desire to be involved in the informal resolution of disputes amongst members.

PART 3: TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010, has the authority assessed the training and development needs of authority members in relation to their responsibilities on standards of conduct?

Yes

If yes, what needs were identified?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Introduction to the Code of Conduct | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elements of the Code of Conduct |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The role and responsibilities of the standards committee | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance/behaviour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

What training/support was provided during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Introduction to the Code of Conduct | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elements of the Code of Conduct |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Role and responsibilities of the standards committee | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance/behaviour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Who received training/support?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee chair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Independent members |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other standards committee members | <input type="checkbox"/> All authority members |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specific authority members with particular needs (e.g. new members, planning committee members) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

What methods were employed to give training/support?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External trainer/speaker |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> One on one training | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joint/regional training event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online learning | <input type="checkbox"/> Guidance notes/briefing materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standards for England materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance toolkit |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Describe the "Other" methods used.

The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee attended the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees in October 2009.

In which areas of the Code of Conduct has training/support been provided?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Respect | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal/Prejudicial Interests |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use of resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bullying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disrepute | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Predisposition, Pre-determination and bias |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confidentiality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

What other training/support has been provided on areas of an authority member's role or activities they may engage in?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Charing skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Lobbying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Predetermination, Predisposition and bias | <input type="checkbox"/> Blogging and/or the use of social media |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Electioneering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Freedom of Information (FOI) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other |

Describe the "Other" training/support provided.

Following county council elections in June 2009, new and re-elected members were offered training on: practicalities (eg IT); being a councillor; local leadership (eg finance, safeguarding, partnerships and localities); regulatory/specialist committee training; community leadership; and media training.

In general, how well attended was the training provided?

25-50%

Please give a brief overview of how standards issues are covered in your induction process for new members of the authority?

In 2009 the Monitoring Officer was given a 30 minute slot on three occasions in three different venues to talk to new and re-elected members about the Code of Conduct and other standards issues. For an individual new member, a one-to-one session with the Monitoring Officer would be arranged.

In which areas of the role and responsibilities of the standards committee has training/support been provided for standards committee members? Please tick all that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial assessments | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other action/mediation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reviews | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Investigations |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hearings | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sanctions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

PART 4: INVESTIGATIONS

Have any investigations been completed during the period 1 April 2009 - 31 March 2010? Yes

How many investigations have been completed during this period?

2

Have any of the investigations used external investigators? Yes

Of the investigations completed during the period, for how many have external investigators been used?

2

Overall, what was your principle reason for out-sourcing the investigation(s)?

Impartiality

What type of external investigator(s) did you use?

Employee of another authority

Self-employed investigator

Private law firm

Other

For the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010, what was the approximate total cost of fees paid to the external investigator(s) for completed cases?

£3766.50

Please provide a brief overview of the processes you have in place to ensure the quality of local investigations.

Investigators have been chosen on the basis that they are well known and highly regarded. In future, investigations will be carried out by trained investigators within the County Council's Customer Rights unit, who are experienced in investigating complaints relating to children and young people's services and adult and community services.

End of form