



Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance)

Standards Committee

Date: 16th December 2009

Subject: Review of the Standards Committee Communications Plan

Electoral Wards Affected:

☐

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

☐

Community Cohesion

☐

Narrowing the Gap

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Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to review the Standards Committee's Communications Plan and to seek approval of any proposed amendments.
2. The communications plan has been reviewed to ascertain whether it has been complied with and whether any amendments to the plan are required. The amended communications plan is attached as Appendix 1.
3. Members of the Committee are asked to comment on and approve the communications plan attached at Appendix 1.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to review the Standards Committee's Communications Plan and to seek approval of any proposed amendments.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Members of the Committee first approved a communications plan for the Standards Committee and conduct issues in January 2006.
- 2.2 Following the results of the Ethical Audit 2006, the Standards Committee chose to request that a communications plan was created for the Standards Committee to identify and segment audiences and objectives, to identify appropriate media for communication and allocate timescales (Ethical Audit Action 10a).
- 2.3 Following this update in October 2007, the communications plan was updated again in October 2008 to reflect the Committee's new local assessment role.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 The Standards Committee has complied with the communications plan adopted in October 2008 overall, although the need for some specific actions, such as press releases following a Standards Committee Hearing, has not arisen.
- 3.2 Information on the ethical framework has not been published in About Leeds in the last year because officers have been anticipating the introduction of a new Code of Conduct during the course of this year. Therefore, an article will appear in About Leeds as soon as the new Code has been released.
- 3.3 Members of the Committee were asked at item 9 (Standards Committee Media Protocol) on this agenda whether they wish for an annual notice to be published in future years in relation to complaints. If the Committee agrees to this, the Communications Plan will be amended to include this requirement.
- 3.4 An additional press release in relation to the local assessment process was not produced in October 2008, as this was deemed to be unnecessary due to the number of complaints that were being received by the authority. There are no plans to produce any further press releases, therefore it is proposed to remove this requirement from the Communications Plan.
- 3.5 A series of minor amendments are also proposed, as follows:
 - (a) Officers – to reflect that the Standards Committee Annual Report will be sent directly to senior officers in future;
 - (b) Public – to reflect that a press release will be issued in relation to the Standards Committee Annual Report in future; and
 - (c) Parish Councils – to reflect that quarterly reminders in relation to registration of interests is the responsibility of the Parish Clerk. Links have also been added to the Parish Council pages on the internet to the Standards Committee Annual Reports, Governance Matters newsletter and Members Code of Conduct on the Council's website.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 4.1 Communicating messages about the ethical agenda and the work of the Standards Committee more widely supports good governance by ensuring that all Members and officers are aware of their responsibilities.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications to this report.
- 5.2 There are resource implications to some of the communications actions listed in the report, particularly with regard to press notices. However it is anticipated that these can be met from within existing resources.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The communications plan has been reviewed to ascertain whether it has been complied with and whether any amendments to the plan are required. The amended communications plan is attached as Appendix 1 and the amendments are shown as tracked changes.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 Members of the Standards Committee are asked to comment on and approve the communications plan attached at Appendix 1.

Background documents

“Standards Committee Communications Plan”, report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) to Standards Committee on 16th October 2008.

Ethical Audit Action Plan 2006