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## Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance)

### Standards Committee

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> February 2010

### Subject: Reviewing the Effectiveness of the Standards Committee

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#### 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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## 1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to review the effectiveness of Leeds City Council's Standards Committee, by comparing its response to Standards for England's Annual Return 2009 with the responses received from all Standards Committees.

## 2.0 Background Information

2.1 In order to assess the effectiveness of the Standards Committee, officers reviewed CIPFA's Audit Committee Self-Assessment Checklist to see if it could be adapted to relate to Standards Committees. As some of the questions relate specifically to Audit Committees, it was felt that the questions from Standards for England's Annual Return would be more applicable, and would also provide the opportunity to compare the Committee's responses with those received from all Standards Committees.

2.2 The purpose of the annual return is to find out what arrangements each authority has in place to ensure and promote high ethical standards. The return asks questions about the way the authority supports ethical standards as a whole, not just how it handles complaints. The annual return is also an opportunity for each authority to inform Standards for England of their particular achievements and successes in supporting and promoting the ethical framework.

2.3 On 8<sup>th</sup> July 2009, the Annual Return for 2009 was presented to the Standards Committee for information.

## 3.0 Main Issues

3.1 In order to assess the effectiveness of the Standards Committee, its responses to the Annual Return 2009 have been compared with the overall responses which have

now been published by Standards for England. A copy of the Committee's responses is attached at Appendix 1, with the overall responses underneath each question.

3.2 The overall responses show that the Standards Committee is meeting best practice in most areas. For example, the Standards Committee is among the:

- 9% (38) of Committees that regularly remind Members to declare interests;
- 2% (7) of Committees that met with the Leader at least four times in the last year;
- 10% (41) of Committees that seek feedback from the people involved in an allegation of Member misconduct about their satisfaction with the complaints process; and
- 34% (143) and 21% (89) of Committees that publish the Member register of interests and register of gifts and hospitality on the authority's website respectively.

3.3 However, there are also some areas which could be improved, which are being addressed as follows:

- In future, a copy of the Standards Committee Annual Report will be sent directly to all senior officers, and a press release will be produced to publicise it;
- The Chair of the Standards Committee now meets with the Leaders of all political groups on a quarterly basis; and
- Officers in Human Resources are assessing whether it would be possible to publish the register of officers' interests on the authority's website.

#### **4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance**

4.1 Reviewing the effectiveness of the Standards Committee contributes to demonstrating a strong ethical framework and culture, which forms part of the Key Lines of Enquiry in the Use of Resources assessment.

#### **5.0 Legal And Resource Implications**

5.1 There are no legal or resource implications as a result of this report.

#### **6.0 Conclusions**

6.1 This report reviews the effectiveness of the Standards Committee, by comparing its response to Standards for England's Annual Return 2009 with the responses received from all Standards Committees.

6.2 The Council is meeting best practice in most areas, however there are some areas which could be improved, and these either have been, or are currently being addressed.

#### **7.0 Recommendations**

7.1 Members of the Standards Committee are asked to note the information in this report, and consider ways in which the effectiveness of the Standards Committee could be further increased.

Background Documents:

Report to Standards Committee 'Standards Board for England Annual Return 2009', 8<sup>th</sup> July 2009