

Standards Committee – Forward Plan 2010/2012

To promote and maintain good governance in Maidstone

Activity	Action/Progress	Timescale
CODE OF CONDUCT		
<p>To consider the changing requirements of central government in respect of the ethical standards regime.</p>	<p>To comment on and thereby influence future government legislation and guidance.</p> <p>Send letter to the Secretary of State urging effective consultation process.</p> <p>Reply received confirming there would be no consultation process. Localism Bill published mid-December.</p> <p>All Members and Co-opted Members of the Committee have been sent a summary of the Bill and extracts of the relevant chapters.</p> <p>Chairman and Monitoring Officer to attend meeting of Maidstone KALC on 5 April 2011 to discuss the implications of the Localism Bill.</p>	<p>Comment within time limits set by any consultation process keeping Members up-to-date at Committee meetings and by e-mail when necessary.</p> <p>Agreed at September 2010 meeting.</p> <p>Chairman and Monitoring Officer reported back to Committee on 6 April 2011.</p>
<p>To liaise with other local standards networks on good practice.</p>	<p>Independent Co-opted Members to attend Kent/Medway Independent Standards Committee Liaison Group, work with other local authorities and report back to the Committee.</p> <p>No further action to be taken on the "Working with Parishes" Protocol in</p>	<p>New developments e.g. toolkits to be reported to and discussed by the Committee.</p> <p>Agreed at December 2010 meeting.</p>

	light of lack of comments from KALC and the Society of Parish Clerks.	
Monitoring the role and effectiveness of the Committee.	Monitoring take up and effectiveness of training, monitoring complaints, reviewing practice against national best practice advice.	Ongoing.
Annual Return to SfE (or other national body).	No longer required.	
Chairman's Annual Report.	Discussion in Committee in April 2011. Consider wider circulation within MBC. Circulated to Parish Clerks and added to MBC's website.	Submitted to and noted by Council on 27 April 2011.
Forward Plan.	Regular monitoring.	Include as a standing item on the agenda for Committee meetings.
Consider dispensation requests from Parish and Borough Councillors.	Deal with requests expeditiously when received. Urgent requests to be determined by Sub-Committee. Promote the use of the pro forma.	Ongoing.
COMPLAINTS PROCESS	(CODE OF CONDUCT)	
Operate the local complaints process.	To carry out the work efficiently, choosing the most effective and economical means to fulfil the Committee's statutory duties.	Ongoing.
Consideration of complaints and 6-monthly returns.	Monitoring.	MO to prepare 6-monthly report to Committee in June 2011.
Monitor progress of investigations.	MO to agree work plan for each investigation in	Agreed at September 2010 meeting.

	consultation with Chairman of Sub-Committee.	
TRAINING		
Regular training for Borough, Parish Representatives and Independent Members and Parish Members and Clerks on the Ethical Framework.	Training for Borough, Parish Representatives and Independent Members and Parish Members and Clerks.	Continue the bi-monthly programme started on 4 October 2010 until June 2011. Decision on whether to continue training – June 2011
Training for Members of the Standards Committee on the work of the Assessment Sub-Committees.	Training for new Members to include refresher training for existing Members.	New Member training as required. Refresher training on annual basis.
Guidance for MBC Officers on how to complain about Members' conduct.	Review MBC complaints and grievance advice for MBC Officers.	Ongoing.
Review and monitor training on the Code of Conduct.	Identify further training and evaluate feedback from training sessions. Training Officer to provide a summary of feedback about the training provided over the last two years.	Training Officer to report feedback annually to Committee. Agreed at February 2011 meeting. Reported to 6 April 2011 meeting.
Consider recommending to Council that it ask all Borough Councillors to undergo initial and periodic refresher training on the Code of Conduct.	Discussion in Committee.	2011-2012.
To consider how to integrate Equality Act 2006 and Human Rights Act 1998 into the training.	Discussion in Committee.	2011-2012.
WORKING WITH MBC		
Chairman of Standards Committee to meet the	To promote and enhance the ethical agenda, raise	Meet on a quarterly basis.

Leader of the Council, Group Leaders and CEO with Monitoring Officer.	status of work of the Committee, outline ways by which the Committee can support the Council as part of MBC's accountability to the public.	Next meeting to be arranged to take place early in August. Chairman to report back to Committee.
Chairman of Standards Committee to meet Chairmen of Audit/Overview and Scrutiny Committees.	Exchange information to complement and not duplicate effort, and to review arrangements for dealing with complaints.	Meet on a six monthly basis. First meeting held on 14 January 2011.
Standards for England Partnership Behaviour Protocol.	To consider the ethical governance aspects of the partnership arrangements entered into by the Council.	MBC Partnerships Protocol endorsed at December 2010 meeting.
Publication of the Members' Register of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality on Council's website.	Consider public accessibility on website and data protection issues. Decision to proceed.	Agreed by Council on 2 March 2011.
Appointment of Independent Chairman, and Vice-Chairman.	Independent Chairman, and Vice-Chairman to be appointed annually.	To be appointed at first meeting after Annual Council Meeting.
Review policy and practice of recruiting Independent and Parish Members.	Consider standardising recruitment procedure and length of service of Independent and Parish Members.	Chairman and Monitoring Officer met with KALC to discuss appointment of Parish representatives.
Recruitment of 2 Independent Members and 1 Parish Member at end of 3 year term.	Recommendation to Council to extend existing terms of office until Annual Council Meeting in May 2012.	Agreed by Council on 27 April 2011.
Deputy Monitoring Officer/legal support.	Consider ways the new shared legal working arrangements can provide effective support to Committee and can minimise delay in dealing with complaints and investigations.	Raised by Chairman at meeting with Group Leaders, CEO and Monitoring Officer – in hand.

Consideration of MBC complaints and quarterly reports.	Monitoring.	Officers to prepare quarterly reports to Committee on regular basis.
Undertake an audit of the awareness of ethics and standards amongst Officers and Members at the Borough and Parish Councils.	Discuss with Audit Committee and Leaders/CEO whether an internal ethical questionnaire would be beneficial given cost.	Raised at meeting with Leaders/CEO and at joint meeting with Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen.
Standards Committee Independent and Parish Members encouraged to attend Council meetings.	To obtain greater understanding of the workings of the Council.	For individual Members to decide according to personal preference and availability.
DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION		
Disseminate information, guidance, toolkits to Committee to raise awareness and stimulate discussion of current issues at Committee meetings.	Reports to Committee, monitoring and updating website, issuing standards bulletins, introduction of speakers at Committee meetings to stimulate discussion.	To be considered at regular intervals at Committee meetings. Leader of the Council, Leader of the Opposition and CEO have addressed the Committee. Leader of the Independent Group to be invited in due course.
RAISING AWARENESS		
Promoting awareness of role and work of the Standards Committee both internally and with the public.	Press releases, increased and up-to-date information on website to show importance of standards in public life, integrated with MBC media strategy.	Ongoing. Develop media strategy to fit in with MBC's media plans.