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To: Governance and Audit Committee – 18 April 2012

Subject: Statements of Required Management Practice (SORPs)

Classification: For assurance and decision

Summary: The paper outlines the progress to date on the development of SORPs. A shift in approach is suggested, away from lengthy SORP documents that set standards, to light-touch and practical guidance to support managers. The Committee are asked to note the proposed approach and consider whether they wish to continue to have oversight of the development of management guidance for staff

1. Background

The original aim of the Statements of Required Management Practice (SORPs) Programme was to address an identified need to support managers in understanding the way that essential management tasks are carried out in KCC. They were developed to underpin the “one council” approach, and to improve consistency in the way that business tasks such as business planning and project management are carried out.

SORPs were intended to consolidate the Council’s agreed policies and procedures in practical terms. However, there was concern from an early stage that they could create confusion and duplication by creating another layer of requirements for managers.

2. Progress to date

Draft SORPs have been developed by accountable ‘owners’ across KCC, in consultation with staff. The first drafts to be completed were shared with DAT for comment and endorsement, before approval by the SORPs Project Sponsor and relevant Cabinet Member. The draft SORPs were then launched for ‘trial implementation’ via KNet for a four month period to gather staff feedback and amended as appropriate. Drafts were shared with Governance and Audit Committee for information prior to being launched for consultation.

There have been concerns that the lengthy development, consultation and approval process has been disproportionate to the intended aim of SORPs. When DAT disbanded, the SORPs programme was paused in order to determine the future direction and approval process for SORPs.

The table below provides a summary of progress on each of the ten SORPs that were originally commissioned:

Name	Owner	Progress to date
SORP 1 - Managing the Council's Performance	Mark Scrivener - Business Strategy	Draft was launched for staff consultation in August 2011. A small number of comments were received. The document was revised and a final version produced. The final version was informally published on KNet in February 2012.
SORP 2 - Business & Financial Planning	Paul McCallum - Finance David Whittle - Business Strategy	Draft was launched for staff consultation in November 2011. No comments were received. Informal feedback has shown that the most useful element of the SORP was the supporting Business Planning template and guidance on setting KPIs, both of which have been widely used.
SORP 3 - Programme & Project Management	Lynn Egercz - Service Improvement	Draft was launched for staff consultation in November 2011. A small number of comments were received. The draft was accompanied by a Programme and Project management guide for staff, and a comprehensive set of tools and templates for programme and project management. Informal feedback has shown that the accompanying practical guidance and tools have been the most useful element.
SORP 4 - Risk Management	Michael Hardie - Business Strategy	Draft was informally published for staff consultation on KNet in March 2011. No comments have been received so far. The SORP is accompanied by practical guides on Risk Management, both for staff who are new to risk management and more detailed guidance for responsible managers. Indications are that this is more useful than the SORP itself, which also replicates the guidance.
SORP 5 - Commissioning & Procurement	Henry Swan - Procurement Mark Lobban - FSC Strategic Commissioning	Drafting underway. Procurement are producing 'How to buy' guides which will be published on KNet to provide practical guidance to staff on the way in which they should procure goods and services. Indications are that this will provide the guidance that is needed and the SORP will not add any additional value.
SORP 6 - Customer Service	Peter Brook - Customer Services	The SORP has been drafted and approved by C&C DMT. It identifies and emphasises the most important points of the Customer Service Strategy. The service has advised that it should be launched in June to time with the end of the communications campaign for staff on the Customer Services Strategy.
SORP 7 - Communication & Engagement	Marcus Chrysostomou - Communication and Engagement	Drafting underway. SORP aims to set out basic principles of communications and engagement, how and when this should happen and signpost to the support that C&E can provide.
SORP 8 - Information Management	Richard Hallett - Business Strategy	Drafting underway. There is a need to clearly set out some mandatory information governance requirements for staff. Other elements of the SORP are best practice guidance.

SORP 9 - Operational Procedures	Janet Armstrong - Internal Audit	Drafting underway. A practical guide for staff on developing operational procedures and template cover sheet is being developed alongside the SORP document. Indications are that accompanying documents will be more useful than the SORP document.
SORP 10 - Internal Governance & Decision Making	Paul Wickenden - Governance and Law	Drafting underway. There is an urgent need to communicate the new governance arrangements to staff. It has been suggested that this guidance is developed as a priority and placed on KNet.

From the progress to date, several patterns emerge. Firstly, despite repeated publication of the opportunity to comment on SORP drafts through K-Mail, K-Net, Change Champions, Challenger events etc, very few comments have been received from staff.

Secondly and significantly, in most cases the accompanying practical guidance, tools and templates have been more useful and better received by staff than the SORP documents themselves.

This suggests that there continues to be a need for light-touch guidance for staff on key business tasks, but not for documents that attempt to impose standards.

3. The way forward

In light of the lessons learnt from progress to date, there will be a shift in the approach to developing guidance for the remaining six categories of management tasks that were originally identified. The four existing SORP documents will also be reviewed.

The emphasis will be on providing practical, useful guidance for managers. The guidance will meet the original aims of helping managers understand what they need to do to run the business effectively, particularly in this time of change. They will also promote consistency and reduce duplication by providing templates and practical guides to carrying out tasks.

The guidance will be developed under a different identity and branding to signify the shift away from required standards to useful guidance that is supportive of managers and staff.

The guidance will be in the form of a series of webpages in a defined area of KNet, so staff can easily find all the guidance in one place. The guidance will link to tools, templates and other sources of helpful information. The content will be 'live' so that it can be refreshed quickly - this is particularly important in allowing us to respond to change.

The content of the guidance will be approved in a light-touch way, through David Whittle as Project Sponsor and Roger Gough as the responsible Cabinet Member.

It is anticipated that the guidance for all ten categories will be published on KNet by September 2012. Priority will be given to those categories where guidance is needed more quickly, for example guidance on Internal Governance and Decision Making will be needed as soon as possible to help staff understand the new governance arrangements which are live from April.

4. Recommendations

Governance and Audit Committee is asked to:

1. Agree the proposed shift in approach to developing management guidance for staff
2. Agree the proposed light-touch approval process for signing off the content of the new management guidance
3. Consider whether G&A Committee wish to have a continuing oversight of the development and roll out of management guidance for staff

Background documents

None

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