

By: Head of Democratic Services

To: Standards Committee - 30 May 2007

Subject: **DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: The Committee's Annual Report to the County Council

For Decision

It is customary for the Chairman of this Committee to submit an annual report to the County Council at its June meeting covering the period June 2007 to June 2008.

The report will of course give details of Members Annual Reports and complaints received during this period.

I also suggest that you include details of the new Regulations and of the Committees future work programme.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is requested to agree the above for inclusion in their annual report and to put forward any other items for inclusion.

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Head of Democratic Services
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Background Documents: None

By: Chairman of Standards Committee
To: County Council – 21 June 2007
Subject: **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**
Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

Introduction

1. This is the fifth Annual Report of the Standards Committee and covers the period from June 2006 to June 2007.

New Code of Conduct for Members

2. (1) In January 2007, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published a consultation paper seeking views on a draft of a proposed new Model Code of Conduct for local authority members.

(2) The Committee considered the consultation paper at its meeting on 6 March 2007 and, on behalf of the County Council, submitted comments on it to the DCLG.

(3) Within four weeks of the closing date for the consultation, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government made The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007, which brought the new Model Code into effect as from 3 May. From that date, local authorities have up to six months in which to adopt the new Model Code.

(4) The Committee has considered the Model Code and made minor amendments to it (as permitted by the Order) to suit the circumstances of the County Council. The resulting new draft Code of Conduct for Members of the County Council (which will supersede the existing Code) is attached at Appendix 1 and **the Committee recommends it for adoption by the County Council.**

(5) The Committee has also approved a new Advice Note for Members on the Registration and Declaration of Interests, which reflects the provisions of the new Code of Conduct. Once the County Council has adopted the new Code, the Advice Note will be circulated to all Members.

Future Programme of Work

(6) The Committee has noted that CIPFA and CPA guidance envisages local authority standards committees becoming much more involved in actively promoting high ethical standards and constituting the main means of raising awareness within their council of standards issues.

(7) We are also aware that changes to the role of standards committees proposed in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, under which they, instead of the Standards Board for England (SBE), will become responsible for dealing in the first instance with allegations of misconduct by Members, will raise the profile of standards committees generally.

(8) The Committee has therefore started giving consideration to a future programme of work which will:

- (a) prepare it for its new role when the provisions in the Bill take effect (expected late 2007/early 2008);
- (b) enable it to better raise awareness of standards issues within the Council.

(9) Places have been reserved for Members of the Committee at a SBE Roadshow to be held in London on 28 June which is intended to share advice and experience on implementing the new Code of Conduct and to provide an update on the new role of standards committees in respect of complaints against Members.

Complaints

3. (1) During the year the Committee was advised of ten formal complaints to the SBE alleging breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct by KCC Members. The SBE took decisions about these complaints as follows:

No investigation required	6
Referred to an Ethical Standards Officer for investigation	4

(2) Of the four complaints investigated by an Ethical Standards Officer, none was upheld.

(3) As part of our new work programme, we are receiving reports at each of our meetings on the most recent SBE findings on allegations of misconduct against KCC Members so that we can identify and publicise within the County Council the lessons that can be learned from those findings.

(4) We also received at our last meeting a report comparing KCC's record on complaints over the last three years with the national position. We will, in future, receive a similar report each year as part of our work to monitor the County Council's performance in terms of ethical standards. We noted that there had been very few complaints against Kent County Councillors and the Committee believes that this confirms a generally healthy awareness of, and compliance with, ethical standards by Members of the County Council.

(5) The procedure for the Chairman of the Committee to facilitate resolution of a possible complaint by one Member against another has, once again, not had to be invoked this year.

Members' Annual Reports

[to be added]

John Ogden, DL
Chairman

Background documents: *Nil*