

By: Miss R MacCrone – Independent Chairman  
Peter Sass - Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership

To: Standards Committee – 28 May 2009

Subject: Annual Return to the Standards Board for England

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Summary: To receive the Council's first annual return to the Standards Board for England.

## **Unrestricted**

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### **Background**

1. The Monitoring Officer is required to submit information to the Standards Board for England (SBE) at the end of each quarter in relation to the number of complaints received about the Conduct of Members and the progress/outcome of each complaint, anonymised accordingly.
2. For the first time this year, the Monitoring Officer is also required to submit an annual return, which provides information about the role of the Standards Committee in promoting ethical standards, Member/Officer relations, leadership, training, registering of interests etc. Attached to this report is a copy of KCC's first annual return, for the Committee's information.
3. The Standards Board has stated that it will produce a report later this year highlighting best practice nationally in relation to the promotion of ethical standards, using information gleaned from the annual returns. When this report is published, it will be useful in terms of guiding the Committee's future work programme.

### **Recommendation:**

4. The Committee is invited to formally note the Council's annual return to the Standards Board for England.

Miss R MacCrone – Independent Chairman of the Standards Committee  
Peter Sass – Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership  
May 2009

Tuesday 19 May 2009

## Annual return

Submitted As Final

### Summary

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### Independent overview

Does the standards committee have Terms of Reference?

Yes

What help do members receive on following the Code of Conduct?

Training and Development activity and regular advice when needed from the Monitoring Officer and his staff

Does the standards committee have a forward work plan?

**Yes**

**If yes, who outside of the standards committee is involved in agreeing the forward work plan? Please explain below.**

**Benchmarking analysis and best practice examples from elsewhere; the views of Group Leaders as to which areas the Standards Committee should focus on; sensitive local issues where there could be an impact on Members' responsibilities under the Code**

**Is the standards committee given a role in reviewing amendments to the Authority's Constitution (or Standing Orders where appropriate)?**

**No**

## **Standards committee meetings.**

**Please use the table below to indicate how many times between 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2009 the standards committee has met and for what reasons.**

<b>Reason for meeting</b>	<b>Number of times met between 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2009</b>
<b>General meeting of whole standards committee</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Training</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Assessment sub-committee</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Review sub-committee</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Consideration meeting</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Hearing</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>0</b>

## **Standards committee - annual report**

**Does the standards committee produce an annual report on its own work?**

**Yes**

**Is the annual report received by a meeting of the full authority?**

**Yes**

**Is the annual report sent to all members?**

**Yes**

**Is the annual report sent to all senior officers?**

**Yes**

**How is the annual report publicised to the general public?**

**On the Authority's website**

## **Standards committee - promoting standards**

**What else does the standards committee do to communicate the role of the standards committee and the importance of high standards internally within the authority to members and officers?**

**Members of the Committee regularly attend Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings to talk informally to elected Members and will bring issues to the Standards Committee arising from their attendance at these meetings.**

**What else has the standards committee done to promote confidence in local democracy to the wider public?**

**The relevant part of the Council's website is under review. The Standards Committee is publishing an article in a publication circulated to all households in the County about their role**

**Has the authority, or the standards committee in particular, considered how it will monitor and ensure high standards of behaviour when the authority is working in partnership with other organisations?**

**No**

## **Standards committee - training**

**Between 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2009, has the authority assessed the training and development needs of members in relation to their responsibilities on standards of conduct?**

**No**

**Please provide a list of training and development opportunities that have been provided to members and officers in the period from 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2009, that are relevant to ensuring high standards. Your list should include any training that relates to the operation of the local standards framework, e.g. local assessment, hearings etc.**

**Training session to Standards Committee Members on the locally managed framework for complaints (April and May 2008) Presentation of the Committee's Annual report to the full Council (May 2008), which**

**included a question and answer session with the independent Chairman of the Standards Committee**

## **Leadership**

**How often has the standards committee, or its chair, met the chief executive to discuss ethical issues in the last 12 months (from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009)?**

**None**

**Please also provide an overview of what the meetings were about.**

**How often has the standards committee, or its chair, met the leader of the council to discuss ethical issues in the last 12 months (from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009)?**

**One**

**Please also provide an overview of what the meetings were about.**

**All 3 party Group Leaders met the Standards Committee to talk about the new locally managed framework and the promotion of high standards of ethical conduct amongst Members (the Committee meets with the Group Leaders formally at least once each year)**

**How often has the standards committee, or its chair, met the other party group leaders to discuss ethical issues in the last 12 months (from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009)?**

**One**

**Please also provide an overview of what the meetings were about.**

**See above**

**Does the standards committee, or its chair, have regular access to the monitoring officer? How regular?**

**On an "as and when" basis. The Monitoring Officer attends all meetings of the Standards Committee**

**How many times in the last 12 months (from 01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009) has the standards committee chair been invited to address a full authority meeting?**

**One**

**Does the monitoring officer sit on the Corporate Management Team, or equivalent?**

**No**

If no, please describe in what ways, if any, the monitoring officer has access to the Corporate Management Team.

The Monitoring Officer has unlimited and unrestricted access to the corporate management team at all times

Has an executive member (or senior member where appropriate) been given portfolio responsibility for standards?

Yes

## **Complaints**

Can the public access information, from the authority website, about how to make a complaint against a member?

Yes

What else has the authority done to advertise the complaint process on member conduct to the general public?

Planning an article in a Council publication that is delivered to each household in the County

Has the authority sought feedback from any of those people involved in an allegation of member misconduct about their satisfaction with the member conduct complaint process (for example the complainant, witnesses or person against whom the allegation was made)? Please choose from responses below.

Yes

How does the authority communicate the outcome of investigations into member conduct to:

a) members

No investigations undertaken

b) officers

No investigations undertaken

c) the general public

No investigations undertaken

How does the authority communicate the outcome of allegations into member conduct which have NOT resulted in an investigation (for example those allegations which have not been referred for investigation

and those allegations which have resulted in other action) to:

a) members

The relevant Members are sent a copy of the decision notice, i.e. the subject Member and the Group Leader and whip

b) officers

Officers are not normally advised

c) the general public

Decision notices are available for public inspection

## **Member officer relations**

**Does the authority have a protocol for relations between members and officers?**

**Yes**

**How is the protocol communicated to officers and members?**

**It is part of the Constitution and reference is made to the key aspects in both Member and Officer induction training**

**What is the mechanism for reviewing the effectiveness of this protocol?**

**Periodic Review by the Corporate Management Team, or when the need arises**

**Does the authority include training on the importance of high standards of behaviour in the inductions of new members and officers?**

**Yes**

**Does the authority have informal mechanisms for dealing with member/officer and member/member disputes?**

**Yes**

**Please provide details of any mechanisms and, if possible, provide an example where this has been used.**

**Informal discussion and resolution by a senior manager**

## **Registering member interests**

**Is the member register of interests accessible to the public on the authority website?**

**Yes**

**Is the register of gifts and hospitality available to the public on the authority website?**

**No**

**What does the authority do to signal to members the importance of declaring interests and completing the register of interests and the register of gifts and hospitality?**

**Included in induction and development training**

## **Officer conduct**

**Does the authority have a code of conduct for senior officers?**

**Yes**

**Does the authority compile a register of senior officers' interests?**

**Yes**

**If yes, is the register of senior officers' interests available to the public on the authority website?**

**Not currently**

**Does the authority compile a register of senior officers' gifts and hospitality?**

**Yes**

**If yes, is the senior officers' register of gifts and hospitality available to the public on the authority website?**

**No**

## **Optional questions**

**The following questions are optional; you do not have to complete them if you do not wish to. However, this information would be useful to us in helping us to raise ethical standards.**

**On what issues, if any, would you appreciate more support or guidance on from the Standards Board for England?**

**The Standards Board for England, the Improvement and Development Agency and the Audit Commission have developed a toolkit that authorities can use to assess the ethical governance arrangements in their authority, and also to identify improvements.**

**Has your authority used the ethical governance toolkit?**

**Yes**

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