

**North East Derbyshire District Council**

**Standards Committee**

**9 December 2015**

**Standards Survey Action Plan**

**Report No ADGMO/22/15-16/SS of the Assistant Director – Governance and Monitoring Officer**

This report is public

**Purpose of the Report**

- To update on the steps taken to address issues raised in the 2014 standards survey.

**1. Report Details**

- 1.1 In late 2013, the Committee commissioned that a survey be undertaken of District Council members and officers and parish and town councillors and clerks into ethical standards. The purpose of the survey was to establish a baseline about what was known about ethical standards, to identify any training requirements and to compare attitudes between members and officers.
- 1.2 The survey ran from 16 February to 31 May 2014 and reports setting out the results from the survey were presented to this Committee at its meetings in July, October and November 2014. Whilst the results uncovered little evidence of hidden misconduct, fraud or corruption, they did identify a lack of training on ethical standards amongst some groups and lack of awareness of key protocols and procedures such as the Member and Officer Protocol and Members' Code of Conduct.
- 1.3 The action plan presented at **Appendix A** set out the steps officers took in response to the points raised in the survey results. These have largely been completed. Some of the issues around improving the perception of the Standards Committee can only be carried through when there are cases to determine.

**2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation**

- 2.1 To advise members of the work undertaken in respect of the standards survey results.

**3 Consultation and Equality Impact**

- 3.1 Consultation on the actions was undertaken with colleagues in the Governance Team and with the Chair of the Committee.

#### **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

4.1 None.

#### **5 Implications**

5.1.1 None.

#### **6 Recommendations**

6.1 That the Committee:

(a) Notes the work already undertaken in respect of actions identified.

(b) Agrees that the action plan be signed off as complete.

#### **7 Decision Information**

<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> (A Key Decision is one which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
<b>District Wards Affected</b>	None
<b>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</b>	None

#### **8 Document Information**

<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
A	Action plan
<b>Background Papers</b> (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
N/A	
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>
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Issue	Proposed actions	Timescale	Lead officer	Progress
<p>Knowledge of what ethical standards is, where to find the Code of Conduct and how to report a breach</p> <p>(Mentioned by officers)</p>	<p>Council to hold briefing sessions covering ethical standards, the Code and how to report a breach</p> <p>Publish details of survey and protocols on the Intranet</p>	<p>October/November 2014</p> <p>October 2014</p>	<p>AD – Governance and Governance Manager</p> <p>Governance Manager</p>	<p>Completed. Demystifying the Constitution sessions for officers completed on 28/10 and 3/11/14. Session for SAMT on 23/1/15.</p> <p>Completed 20/10/14.</p>
<p>Standards Committee not seen as making a positive difference to ethical standards</p> <p>(Officers, parish councillors and clerks)</p>	<p>Publicise the outcome of complaints where there has been a breach of the Code</p> <p>Send a copy of Committee's annual report to all parish and town councils</p> <p>Publish a copy of the Committee's annual report on the Intranet</p> <p>Results of ethical standards survey presented at District and Parish Liaison Meeting</p>	<p>As and when</p> <p>May 2015</p> <p>May 2015</p> <p>January 2015</p>	<p>Governance Manager</p> <p>Senior Governance Officer</p> <p>Senior Governance Officer</p> <p>Governance Manager / Chair of Committee</p>	<p>No breaches of the Code under 2012 regime have yet occurred.</p> <p>Completed following publication of the annual report in May 2015.</p> <p>Completed.</p> <p>Completed 21 January 2015.</p>

Issue	Proposed actions	Timescale	Lead officer	Progress
<p>Lack of training given on ethical standards matters</p> <p>(Officers and clerks)</p>	<p>Council to hold briefing sessions covering ethical standards, the Code and how to report a breach</p> <p>Hold parish council event either before or after the elections, potentially plug into DALC seminar and SLCC event</p> <p>Make offer to clerks to attend parish and town councils to advise on standards and governance issues generally</p>	<p>October/November 2014</p> <p>Summer 2015</p> <p>December 2014</p>	<p>AD – Governance and Governance Manager</p> <p>Governance Team</p> <p>Senior Governance Officer</p>	<p>Completed on 28/10 and 3/11/14. Separate session for SAMT on 23/1/15.</p> <p>The Council held a joint session with DALC following the elections where ethical standards issues were covered.</p> <p>Completed – letter sent 11 December 2014</p>
<p>Concerns about level of clarity and accessibility of Council's complaints procedures</p> <p>(Officers and clerks)</p>	<p>Publish details of survey and protocols on the Intranet</p> <p>Hold parish council event either before or after the elections, potentially plug into DALC seminar and SLCC event</p>	<p>October 2014</p> <p>Summer 2015</p>	<p>Governance Manager</p> <p>Governance Team</p>	<p>Completed.</p> <p>The Council held a joint session with DALC following the elections where ethical standards issues were covered.</p>

Issue	Proposed actions	Timescale	Lead officer	Progress
	Write to all parish clerks enclosing ROI forms and copies of relevant procedures	Late April 2015	Governance Manager	Completed following the elections. All parish and town council ROIs are now displayed on the District Council's website.
Knowledge about Member/ Officer Protocol  (Officers)	Publish details of survey and protocols on the Intranet	October 2014	Governance Manager	Completed.
Knowledge of member decision making process  (Officers)	Council to hold briefing sessions covering the decision-making process	October/November 2014	AD – Governance and Governance Manager	Completed on 28/10 and 3/11/14. Separate session for SAMT on 23/1/15.
Concerns about knowledge of confidential arrangements for staff to express concerns about fraud, misconduct and corruption  (Officers)	Publish details of survey and protocols on the Intranet	October 2014	Governance Manager	Completed.
Lack of knowledge about how seriously complaints are taken by the District Council  (Officers)	Publicise the outcome of complaints where there has been a breach of the Code	As and when	Governance Manager	No breaches have so far occurred.