

# THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

17 MAY 2006

## REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

<b>Title: Annual Report of the Standards Committee 2005 / 2006</b>	<b>For Information</b>	
<b>Summary:</b>  This report summarises the remit of the Standards Committee and key issues dealt with during the year 2005/2006.  The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by all Members and employees of the Council and to assist them in observing relevant Codes of Conduct.  The Committee has concentrated on reviewing all policies and procedures relating to ethical standards, and is particularly grateful to the two independent members for their valuable interest and support.  <b>Wards Affected:</b> None.		
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### 1. Standards Committee Work

1.1 The Committee meets every two months and has covered the following key issues during the past year:

#### 1.2 The Standards Board for England

The Board was officially launched in 2001 and the Committee has kept up to date with advice and information from the Board through Standards Board Bulletins and details of Standards Board investigations and decisions.

#### 1.3 Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy

The Committee reviewed and amended the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and Strategy, recommending a wider consultation with senior managers and agents of the Council.

#### 1.4 Benefits Fraud Policies

In July 2004 the Benefit Fraud policies were agreed, with the requirement that the policies be reviewed on an annual basis by the Standards Committee. The Committee considered the policies and decided that they be maintained without change for a further year.

#### 1.5 Use of Council Resources, Facilities and Equipment

This Guide was developed by the Standards Committee as a result of concerns expressed by Members. The Guide is included in the Council Constitution and is subject to annual review by the Committee.

#### 1.6 Conferences, Visits and Hospitality Rules

These Rules have been in operation for six years and are included in the Council Constitution. Suggested minor changes to them, following consultation with all Members, Chief Officers and Heads of Service, were agreed by the Committee.

#### 1.7 Annual Report of the Head of Audit

The Standards Committee received a report updating it on the work of Internal Audit, outlining recurring areas of concern and indicating what steps are being taken to counter them.

#### 1.8 Standards for Members of the Public (Volunteers) Undertaking Council Activities

As part of the review of all documents and policies which relate to standards or conduct issues, the Committee revisited these Standards, undertaking further consultation to ensure they were being applied where appropriate and that no difficulties had been encountered in their use.

#### 1.9 Code of Conduct

Having taken part in the Standards Board for England's consultation on the national Code of Conduct for Members, the Committee is currently awaiting the outcome and subsequent revised model code.

#### 1.10 Member / Employee Relations Protocol

Following consultation, the Committee recommended minor amendments be made to the document, in the main relating to the advice on 'Familiarity, Friendships and Relationships' and 'What Members Can Expect of Employees'.

#### 1.11 Planning Code for Members

This new Code sets out the rules and procedures for the Council's Development Control Boards when determining planning applications and enforcement actions. The Standards Committee agreed that the Code would help ensure there are no grounds for suggesting that a decision has been biased, partial or not well founded in the planning process, and recommended its formal adoption by the Assembly.

### 1.12 Licensing and Regulatory Board Code of Conduct for Members

Following the successful introduction of a Code of Conduct for Members in planning matters, the need for an equivalent was identified for the Licensing and Regulatory function. The Committee considered the Code and also recommended its adoption by the Assembly.

### 1.13 Comprehensive Performance Assessment

The Committee decided that, in light of CPA expectations relating to standards and ethical issues, it should review how it operates particularly in reference to the Council's performance in the "Use of Resources" service block, focusing as it does on monitoring, and testing the operation and effectiveness of the ethical framework, and providing information on the implications of the ethical framework to the public, partners, Members and staff.

## 3. Consultation

### 3.1 The following were consulted in the preparation of this report

- Councillor Curtis, former Chair of the Standards Committee
- John Tatam, Corporate Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive
- Nina Clark, Assistant Chief Executive (Democracy and Partnerships)

### **Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:**

- Public agendas and minutes of Standards Committee meetings 2005 / 2006.