

## **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL BY STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider the Standards Committee's Annual Report.

### **Information and Advice**

2. Standards Committee's Annual Report is attached in the **Appendix** to this Report.
3. The Committee produces an annual report in accordance with best practice recommended by Standards for England. It is suggested that annual reports are brought to the attention of all members; for this reason the Report is presented to Full Council.
4. Standards Committee approved the report on 5 July 2011 and the Council's Corporate Leadership Team considered its content on 20 September 2011.

### **Other Options Considered**

5. No other options are presented for consideration.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

6. The report is for noting only.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

7. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the report be noted.

**COUNCILLOR MARTIN SUTHERS**  
**Deputy Leader of the County Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Sue Bearman (tel 0115 9773378)

**Constitutional Comments**

8. Because this report is for noting only no Constitutional Comments are required.

**Financial Comments (MB 24/10/2011)**

9. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

**Background Papers**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Standards Committee Report dated 5 July 2011 is published on the Council's [website](#)
- Agendas, minutes and reports for all Standards Committee meetings are published on the Council's [website](#)
- Further information about the Localism Bill is published on Parliament's [website](#)
- Information about good practice for standards committees is published on the Standards for England [website](#)

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All

## **Appendix**

### **ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL BY STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

#### **Foreword by the Leader of the County Council**

Nottinghamshire County Council and all its elected Members take their duties and responsibilities as elected representatives of their communities very seriously, and acknowledge that the highest standards of conduct are required from them by the electorate.

I would like to thank the Standards Committee for its contribution to ensuring those high standards.

Councillor Kay Cutts, Leader

#### **Chair's Introduction to the Report**

In my introduction to last year's report I stressed the need for the highest ethical standards in local government.

I continue to be impressed by the commitment to these standards by senior Councillors and managers within the County Council. I am also impressed by the dedication of the members of the Standards Committee to the implementation of the Code of Conduct and to the manner in which they have carried out the wide range of functions assigned to the Committee. I am grateful for their support during the last 12 months.

The Standards Committee will continue to be a robust defender of the Codes of Conduct and will act decisively if needed. The Committee also recognises that in a political environment there will be disagreements and things said in the heat of the moment, but is confident that respect and integrity will remain the watchword for the Council.

I thank the Council's Leader for her Foreword, and the Corporate Leadership Team for taking time to consider the report.

Charles Daybell, Standards Committee Chair

## **Review**

- **Engaging Leadership**

The Chair has held meetings with the Political Group Business Managers, the Leaders of the Political Groups, the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer.

- **Complaints of alleged breaches by Councillors of the Code of Conduct**

Only one complaint required a full investigation and this resulted in formal action. Two other complaints were assessed by the Committee; in both cases it was decided that no further action was necessary. This picture reflects well upon the County Council.

In the interest of speedy and cost-effective resolution of complaints, the Monitoring Officer assists the Committee by working to resolve complaints informally at the earliest possible stage. If a complaint is resolved informally there is no need to refer to the Committee for assessment.

- **Work Timetable**

The Committee approved a work timetable. The Committee has met 10 times and has reviewed its functions and operations so as to ensure that it is providing an efficient service. It has satisfactorily dealt with all of the functions required of it under the County Council's Constitution and with any specific requests for action.

A communications plan for the next 12 months was approved in March. The plan sets out how the Committee intends to promote awareness of ethical governance issues.

The Chair has continued to liaise with the independent chairs of neighbouring Standards Committees to share good practice.

## **Looking Forward**

With the Coalition Government making a commitment under the Localism Bill to abolish the standards regime the Committee has looked carefully at the implications for the County Council.

The Committee has expressed concern that the whole standards regime could be abolished including the Code of Conduct. Whilst welcoming the demise of Standards for England it is the view of the Standards Committee that this is an opportunity to develop a more informal process for handling complaints, and the Committee would like to be involved in developing that process. At the same time the Committee considers that by being independent and effective it contributes to the generally excellent standards within the County Council.

The Committee considers that the perception of the public, community groups and businesses could be undermined by any lessening of transparent scrutiny and that unethical behaviour elsewhere (the MPs' expenses scandal) still resonates and impacts across the whole public sector.

Clearly the future of standards is a matter for the County Council as a whole. In the meantime the Standards Committee will resolutely remain committed to carrying out the functions assigned to it.

## **Background Information about the Standards Committee**

The Standards Committee is comprised of 5 elected Councillors, including the Council's Deputy Leader, and 4 independent members whose appointment was approved by Full Council. The Chair, Charles Daybell, is an independent member. Elected Councillor Les Ward is the Vice Chair. There is one vacancy.

The current membership was appointed in May 2011.

The role and function of the Committee is set out in Article 9 of the Council's Constitution. Broadly, the Committee has responsibility for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by the County Council, its Members and Officers. It monitors the operation of Codes of Conduct and Practice of the County Council. It is also responsible for dealing with complaints in relation to alleged breaches of the Members Code of Conduct by Councillors.