

# CHESHIRE EAST

## Standards Committee

---

**Date of meeting:** 25 November 2008  
**Report of:** Governance Group  
**Title:** Standards Committee website presence

---

### 1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek the Committee's views on the website presence of the Standards Committee.

### 2.0 Decision Required

- 2.1 To decide on whether the Standards Committee wish to include the following information on the Cheshire East website:

- 2.1.1 Names of independent and parish members;
- 2.1.2 Details about independent and parish member recruitment and the role they play on the Committee;
- 2.1.3 The Committee's Terms of Reference;
- 2.1.4 A Frequently Asked Questions section giving details about what the Committee does and the powers it has;
- 2.1.5 Information on how complaints against members can be made (including a complainant form and guidance);
- 2.1.6 Information on who the Monitoring Officer for the Authority is and the played within the Council;
- 2.1.7 A guide to the Code of Conduct;
- 2.1.8 Information on the Standards Board for England;
- 2.1.9 Useful links to external sources that relate to the Standards Committee.

- 2.2 To authorise the Interim Monitoring Officer to organise the relevant web pages and inclusion on the Cheshire East Website.

### 3.0 Information

- 3.1 With the growing use of the internet the Council's website will be a valuable way of communicating with the public. Therefore, it is recommended that the Standards Committee have a clear and identifiable presence on it. Promotion of the Standards Committee's presence and role was a particular message arising out of the recent Standards Board annual conference.
- 3.2 This report is aimed at helping members decide the level of presence the Committee should have.
- 3.3 The Website currently holds a limited amount of information on the committee.
- 3.4 The recruitment process for Independent and Parish members of the Committee is currently nearing its conclusion and once membership is complete, it is recommended that members' names appear on the Website. This will enable the public to fully

understand how the Committee is constituted. It will also show to members of the public that the Committee includes people from all walks of life and not just Councillors.

- 3.5 The Committee may also want to include information on how independent and parish members are selected and the role they play on the Committee.
- 3.6 The Committee may wish to include a Frequently Asked Questions section detailing what the Committee does and what powers it has.

#### **4.0 Complaints**

- 4.1 The Committee is currently responsible for dealing with complaints received against members of the Shadow Authority. From 1 April 2009 it will also become responsible for complaints relating to members all Parish Councils in the Cheshire East area.
- 4.2 Currently complaints can be made to Cheshire East in writing addressed to the Chairman of the Standards Committee, care of the Interim Monitoring Officer.
- 4.3 The Committee may wish to consider including a complaint form on the Website. The complaint form may be accompanied by guidance on its completion and guidance on the complaints procedure generally.
- 4.4 Including this will allow members of the public to find complaint information easily and help show that Cheshire West and Chester is a transparent authority and willing to hold its members to account.
- 4.5 If the Committee wish to include such information on the Website, a report with draft documents will be brought to the Committee at a later date.

#### **5.0 Other possibilities**

- 5.1 The Committee may also wish to include the following information on the Website:
  - 5.1.1 Information on who the Monitoring Officer for the Authority is and the role they play within the Council
  - 5.1.2 A guide to the Code of Conduct. This would be particularly useful if the Committee decide to include information on complaints
  - 5.1.3 Information on the Standards Board for England. This could include links to the Standards Board for England's website.
  - 5.1.4 Useful links to external sources that relate to the Standards Committee: for example, links to the Council's constitution and links to relevant legislation and guidance.

#### **6.0 Other Authorities**

- 6.1 Most, if not all, authorities in England include information relating to their Standards Committee on their website. However, the amount of information included varies greatly between authorities.
- 6.2 Some authorities include the minimum information possible. For example, the website may contain details of where complaints can be sent and a small amount of information on what the Standards Committee does.
- 6.3 Other authorities include all the information outlined in this report.

- 6.4 The Standards Board for England has produced no guidance on this area, but has stressed the importance of raising the profiles and understanding of the work of Standards Committees. It is a matter for the individual authority to decide how it approaches the issue of website presence but clearly this is a valuable way of spreading information about their work.

## **7.0 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 There is no legislation or guidance that specifically covers what a Standards Committee should place on its website but the need to address this is explained elsewhere in this report.

## **8.0 Risk Assessment**

- 9.1 Promoting the work of the Standards Committee and public understanding of it helps mitigate against the risk of public misunderstanding of standards, governance and ethics issues within the Council and may help to improve public perception and appreciation of the arrangements for proper conduct within the Council.

## **10.0 Overview of Day One, Year One and Term One Issues**

- 10.1 Promoting the work of the Standards Committee will assist the Shadow Council in ensuring proper preparation for all Day One, Year One and Term one Issues.

### **For further information:**

Officer: Julie Openshaw Interim Monitoring Officer

Tel. No: 01625 504250

Email: [j.openshaw@macclesfield.gov.uk](mailto:j.openshaw@macclesfield.gov.uk)

### **Background Documents:**

N/a