

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

On 30 September 2002

Report title: The Standards Committee and Communications**Report of: Monitoring Officer****1. Purpose**

Report on proposals to assist the Standards Committee in improving its communication with Members and with members of the public.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Standards Committee :

- a) Decides whether it wishes to contribute a regular item relating to ethical standards issues to the Council's **Insight** magazine
- b) Decides whether further consideration should be given to the production of a Standards Committee bulletin either in addition to or instead of a) above.
- c) Decides the level at which we may now proceed with the placing of information on the website.
- d) Decides the level at which it might in future like to place information on the website and agrees to Officers exploring the matter further, reporting back to the next meeting of the Committee.

Report authorised by: Deputy Monitoring Officer**Contact officer: John Suddaby****Telephone: 0208 489 3974****3. Executive summary**

Report making proposals to the Standards Committee on how it may improve its communications with members and with the public as part of its duty to support the maintenance of high ethical standards in the Council.

4. Access to information:

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
Local Government Act 2000.

5. Report

5.1 Communications and Members

The Standards Committee has as one of its main roles the duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by elected members and voting co-opted members. This includes a role of assisting members to observe Haringey's Code of Conduct and of advising members on matters relating to the Code.

While individual questions relating to the code may best be dealt with by reference to the monitoring officer, the role of raising awareness and understanding of ethical issues and responsibility is best carried out by the Standards Committee. This will include keeping members updated on key developments at Government and Standards Board level and providing information and guidance on the way in which the new framework is being interpreted in practice across the country.

There are two possibilities for doing this:

- The Council produces a publication for members entitled **Insight** and it may be considered appropriate for members of Standards Committee to provide a regular item for this, updating members on ethical issues - including giving advice on some of the more common questions that arise.

Initial contact has been made with officers in the Communications Section who have reacted favourably to some form of regular input on these issues.

Voting co-opted and independent members are not currently part of the audience for **Insight**, so *either* they would have to be included in the circulation list *or* special arrangements would need to be made to keep them informed on an equal footing with elected Members.

- The Standards Committee may wish to consider producing its own bulletin either in place of or in addition to contributing to **Insight**. This, however, would require some commitment to regular contributions, the appointment from among members of the committee of a co-ordinating editor and would involve some consideration of the costs of publication. There would also need to be discussions about the implications for the corporate communications strategy.

2. Communications and the Public

The 2000 Act requires the monitoring officer to publicise in the local press the creation of the Council's Register of Members' Interests and its availability for inspection at Council offices.

Some local authorities, in addition to this requirement, have placed or are planning to place a copy of their Register of Members' on their web-sites. An initial survey has produced the information at Appendix 1.

The new ethical framework ushered in by the Local Government Act 2000 aims to improve the ethical governance of public authorities and in turn to heighten public awareness and confidence in the probity of the running of local government.

It is intended, as part of its obligations under this framework, that Haringey will place on its web site general information (ie. information not containing details of named people) about the Code of Conduct, Registration of Interests/Gifts and Hospitality the Standards Committee, etc.

The question to be addressed is the extent (if any) to which we should go beyond this by giving some details about named people. Various levels of detail are possible:

- **Level 1 General information only**

With no details about named people

- **Level 2 details (names only)**

Names of SC members, indicating the Chair and Deputy Chair. Possibly also with the names of the Monitoring Officer and the Secretary to SC.

- **Level 3 details (names and limited contact details)**

As Level 2, but with haringey.gov.uk email addresses, possibly as clickable links

- **Level 4 details (names and addresses)**

As level 3 but with home addresses (Office addresses for Officers)

- **Level 5 (Register of Interests)**

As level 4 but with the contents of the Register of Interests for *everyone who is required to register his/her interests*.

Note that, for SC members (and others, of course) who own property (including their own home) within Haringey, the Register of Interests will include the person's home address. It is therefore in general not possible to publish the Register of Interests without giving home address.

- **Level 6 (Register of Gifts and Hospitality)**

As Level 5, but also giving details of the Register of Gifts and Hospitality

5.3 Decisions needed

It is asked that the Standards Committee :

- a) Decides whether it wishes to contribute a regular item relating to ethical standards issues to the Council's **Insight** magazine
- b) Decides whether further consideration should be given to the production of a Standards Committee bulletin either in addition to or instead of a) above.

- c) Decides the level at which we may now proceed with the placing of information on the website.
- d) Decides the level at which it might in future like to place information on the website and agrees to Officers exploring the matter further, reporting back to the next meeting of the Committee.

APPENDIX I

Responses from other Authorities to putting the Register of Interest on to their websites.

Kingston	Not yet but will be.
Camden	Yes
Redbridge	Not yet
Islington	No
Bromley	Yes
Richmond	Were going to, but are now having 2nd thoughts. Monitoring Officer's seeking advice from the solicitors working with the Council on Data Protection Compliance.
Barking and Dagenham	Doesn't look like we will as some Members are concerned about it
Waltham Forest	Not yet
Barnet	No
Harrow	We have no plans to publish our register on the web, but it will be discussed with our SC in due course. Even if SC agree, we would only put the entry for those individual members who consent onto the web.
Merton	Not doing so yet but it will be an item for discussion by the Standards Cttee in due course.
Ealing	No
Lewisham	In the long term yes
Tower Hamlets	Yes its our intention
Sutton	Not at the moment
Hammersmith & Fulham	No - but thinking about it
Enfield	No but we may do in the future.
Brent	No
Greenwich	No
Hillingdon	We do not currently do this but it is something that our Monitoring Officer has considered. While it is definitely a good idea in principle and will extend public information there is one possible drawback in that it could give wide circulation to Members' home addresses. When we compile our list of names and addresses of Members some of them are reluctant to give details of their homes

	because of experience of harassment in the past. We would need to give careful consideration to how to overcome this problem before putting the register on the Council's web site.
Havering	No
Kensington & Chelsea	It is not on our website and I'm not aware of any plans to put it there.
Croydon	Croydon hasn't done so yet but we're looking at it subject to Members' agreement (and the Standards Board's advice on the Data Protection Act implications of putting the Register on the Web) and the logistics of ensuring that the electronic and paper versions can be promptly updated so that they always coincide.
Corporation of London	No, this authority will not be placing the register on the internet
Wandsworth	Our Register of Members' is (or soon will be) available on our website, and Members are able to make changes themselves on-line.
Lambeth	No
London Fire and Emergency PA	No

Summary

Yes 2

No 16

Possibly in future 9