

Agenda Item

Council *on* 16th July 2007

Report title: Annual Report from the Standards Committee : 2006 / 07

Report of: Standards Committee

1. Purpose

To report on the activities of Standards Committee over the previous year and to give information on the monitoring of the Members' Code of Conduct and of complaints against members.

2. Recommendations

That Council note the report.

Report authorised by: **Ms Irene Francis, Chair of the Standards Committee**

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3. Access to information:

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

ANNUAL REPORT FROM STANDARDS COMMITTEE: 2006/07

1. Introduction

Message from Chair of the Standards Committee

The Standards Committee has continued its effective work in the past municipal year, promoting, developing and maintaining high standards of conduct by the members and co-opted members of the authority. The Committee has also advised on the implementation of the new Code of Conduct, responded to the Ethical Governance Action Plan and organised training for all Councillors on Standards matters.

This year, the Committee welcomed Ms Carol Sykes as a new independent member. The Committee bid farewell to Davina Fiore, the now-former Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer, and officially noted their thanks towards her. The Committee welcomed John Suddaby, her former Deputy, as her successor.

The most significant issue covered by the Committee this year has been the revised Code of Conduct, which has now come into force. Training sessions have been organised for Members on this topic, with further sessions likely to be arranged over the course of the upcoming municipal year. Member attendance at Ethical Governance training sessions increased significantly on last year; however, Members are still strongly encouraged to attend sessions to allow them to be informed in detail over the new Code, and other Standards-related issues and developments.

The Committee also looked closely at the Ethical Governance Action Plan, which came out of the Council's Ethical Governance audit by the Audit Commission in Mid-2006, and received monitoring information on the implementation of its provisions and recommendations. The Committee will continue to monitor these developments in the current year.

The Register of Gifts and Hospitalities and the Register of Members Interests continue to be available for all to view both in hard copy and on the Council's website. Individual declarations made at meetings are also able to be viewed on-line as part of meetings' minutes.

The Standards Committee continues to carry out important work for the maintenance of public standards in Haringey, and we all look forward to another successful year ahead.

Irene Francis
Chair, Standards Committee

2. Signatories to the Members' Code of Conduct

At the end of the reporting year all Councillors (57) and Co-opted and Independent Members (6) who were eligible to sign accepting the Code of Conduct had done so.

The voting co-opted and independent members were members of two Committees:

- Standards Committee: 4 independent members
- Overview & Scrutiny Committee: 2 co-opted members

3. Details of the Standards Committee

3.1 Political Breakdown

At the start of the reporting period, Standards Committee consisted of

4 Labour Councillors; 4 Liberal Democrat Councillors; 4 Independent members

3.2 Changes in membership

The committee welcomed five new Members, Councillors Edge, Egan, Kober, Lister and Mughal, replacing Councillors Haley, Makanji, Reynolds, Rice and Robertson.

3.3 Chair and Deputy Chair

Ms I Francis and Mr N Weber were elected, respectively, as Chair and Deputy Chair.

3.4 Meetings

Three ordinary meetings and one special meeting were held during the year. The Minutes of Meetings held during the year, having been previously circulated, are available, by request, from the Standards Committee Secretary and for inspection in the Members' Rooms, prior to and immediately following the Council Meeting on 16th July 2007.

The Minutes are also available on the authorities website at <http://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk> Please contact Jeremy Williams for further information on 0208 489 2919 or at Jeremy.williams@haringey.gov.uk .

3.5 Monitoring Officer

Members noted their thanks to the work carried out by Davina Fiore during her period as Monitoring Officer, and welcomed John Suddaby to the rôle at the March meeting of the committee.

3.6 Ethical Governance Audit and Action Plan

Following on from the audit of the Councils Ethical Governance arrangements carried out in Mid 2006 by the Audit Commission, an action plan was agreed with the Commission and work on implementing its provisions has been ongoing during 2006/7. The following progress has been made:

- Work has started on unifying the Council's web pages so that the standards of conduct and customer care that the public can expect from the Council, from Members and Officers are made more accessible and have their own page. This work will be completed now that the new revised Members Code of Conduct has been adopted by the Council AGM on 21 May 2007.
- Adoption of the new revised Code of Conduct will be published in the local press and use will also be made of Haringey people for this.
- A review has been started of the Councils arrangements for partnerships it is involved in. A working group has adopted a draft definition of partnerships and a risk analysis framework and is presently reviewing all our partnerships to assess them using this and to thereby determine what governance arrangements are appropriate.
- A draft Code of Conduct for working in partnership bodies has been produced but will need to be amended in the light of the new Members Code of Conduct before it is brought for considerations by bodies of the Council, including the Standards Committee.
- Work has been ongoing with regards to Member development on ethical governance issues. Training has been held on Code of Conduct developments and also to provide guidance on Member involvement on outside bodies.
- A report has been taken to the Executive (now Cabinet) following a review of Member involvement on outside bodies and that committee has asked for further work to be done.
- Amendments to the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy to bring it into line with the Members Code of Conduct and a further review will have to be done to ensure that any relevant changes in the new Code are also reflected in the Policy.

4 Register of Members' Financial and Other Interests (RFOI)

The RFOI is available for inspection, by appointment within normal working hours, at River Park House.

Additionally, a simplified version of the RFOI is on the Haringey Council website. The simplification consists of:

- modification of entries by removal of personal contact details;

- an opt-in policy, designed to ensure members are content that other details, such as employment details, could not lead to violation of their personal privacy.

5 Register of Members' Gifts and Hospitality (RGH)

5.1 Summary of Registrations

All signatories to the Members' Code of Conduct are required to register with the Monitoring Officer each Gift or item of Hospitality of value more than £25 received and arising out of their official positions.

A full list of entries registered for items of gifts and hospitality offered during the year is given in the Appendix. A summary by value of the items registered for the year is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Values of gifts and/or hospitality

Value	Number of items registered	
	This Year	Last Year
Less than £25 ¹	5	10
£25-£50 ²	73	52
£50-£100	14	26
£100-£150	7	5
£150-£200	12	3
£200-£300	1	1
£300-£400	2	2
£400-£500	1	1
£500 or more	0	0
Approximate total value^{3,4}	£6,200	£ 4,800
No value declared	2	1

NOTES to Table 1:

1. The Members' Code of Conduct does not *require* registration of items valued at less than £25. Members may, however, voluntarily register such items if they wish.

2. Where the value of an item was declared by means of a range falling into more than one of the tabulated intervals then it has been included in the higher such interval. For example, if a value had been declared as "£30-£60" then it would have been shown against the interval "£50-£100".

3. For the purpose of enabling an approximate total value to be calculated from this Table, it is necessary to give each interval a representative value. This is the lower end of that interval; for example, the interval "£50-£100" has the representative value of £50. Consequently, items valued at less than £25 are not included in the approximate total value, and items in the range "£500 or more" have been treated as if valued at £500.

4. The final approximate total, shown, has been rounded *up* to the nearest £100.

39 councillors and voting co-opted/independent members registered at least one gift or instance of hospitality during the year.

5.2 Acceptance

As part of the registration process, members were asked what they did with each item of gift/hospitality they were offered. For Hospitality, there are two meaningful options (Accepted, Not Accepted). For Gifts, there is a wider range of possibilities. Tables 2a and 2b summarise the responses.

Table 2a: How offers of Hospitality were treated

	Number of items of Hospitality	
	Not Accepted	Accepted
This Year	0	88
Last Year	1	83

Table 2b: How offers of Gifts were treated

	Number of Gifts				
	Not Accepted	Personally retained	Donated to charity	Donated to the Authority	Other
This Year	0	4	25	0	0
Last Year	0	4	11	0	1

Note. There is no requirement that the Monitoring Officer be notified when an otherwise-registerable Gift or Hospitality has been offered but refused, although it is **strongly recommended** that this be done. The figures under "Not Accepted" should therefore be interpreted with caution.

5.3 Donors

Also as part of the registration process, members were asked who offered them the gift or hospitality. Table 2c summarises donors by approximate type.

Table 2c: Donors of Gifts and Hospitality

	Classification of Donor					
	Private Company	Council/ Parliamentary	Club/ Assoc	Individual	Consultancy	Not known
This Year	18	54	33	11	0	1
Last Year	17	62	14	3	4	0

5.4 Access

The RGH is available for inspection, by appointment within normal working hours, at River Park House. It is also available on the Authority's website.

6 Declarations of Interest

The definitions of “personal interest” and “prejudicial interest” are given in the Members’ Code of Conduct. A prejudicial interest is a special type of personal interest, so all Interests are personal, and the distinction is therefore not between "personal" and "prejudicial" but, rather, between "prejudicial" and "personal, non-prejudicial": there has continued to be confusion on this point of terminology.

It is a breach of the Code for a member (or other signatory) to fail to declare the appropriate type of interest at the appropriate stage in any proceedings, and could lead to a formal complaint being made. Anyone declaring a prejudicial interest is required to leave the chamber (or committee room) and to take no part in the discussion or decision-making; anyone declaring a personal but non-prejudicial interest may continue to play a full rôle.

Declaration of Interests is placed as a specific Item on the Agenda of every meeting of the Full Council and of every meeting of every serviced committee.

Council Minutes show there were **153** declarations of personal, non-prejudicial interest at meetings of the full Council during the whole year. There were **4** declarations made of prejudicial interest

7 Complaints about alleged failures to adhere to the Members’ Code of Conduct

7.1 Complaints decided during the year

The number of complaints concerning alleged breaches of the Members’ Code of Conduct which were decided during the year is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Complaints decided during the year

	This Year	Last Year
Decided by an Ethical Standards Officer	1	1
Decided by the Adjudication Panel for England	0	0
Decided by the Standards Committee	0	1

7.1.1 Complaints decided by an Ethical Standard s Officer

7.1.1. (a) Case Reference SBE14281.06

A member failed to declare a personal interest, failed to withdraw from a meeting when a matter in which she had a prejudicial interest was discussed and improperly sought to influence a decision on the matter. The Ethical Standards Officer found that, in the circumstances of the case, no action needed to be taken.

7.1.2 Complaints decided by the Adjudication Panel for England

(None)

7.1.3 Complaints decided by the Standards Committee

(none)

7.2 Complaints outstanding

Standards Committee has not been notified of any other outstanding complaints.

8. Training

8.1 Training for Standards Committee members

The Monitoring Officer held training sessions for Standards Committee members on the procedures to follow when hearing determinations, and a general update session on standards issues.

8.2 Training for signatories to the Members' Code of Conduct

Two training sessions were held during the year for signatories to the Code of Conduct. Both sessions reviewed the Code of Conduct and covered the guidance issued by the Standards Board of England.

Attendance, as shown by signatures on the attendance sheets (both repetitions of each session combined), was as given in Table 4.

Table 4: Attendance at training sessions for signatories to the Code of Conduct

Number of training sessions attended	Number of Councillors	Number of independent/ co-opted members
None	19 (37)	5 (5)
1	38 (19)	1 (5)
2	2 (0)	2 (0)

(Note: Last Year's figures in brackets. Total of 57 Councillors listed for this year)

There has been a significant increase in the number of Councillors who did attend some of the training sessions. 19 did not attend any training at all, but the overall attendance was higher than last year. It remains important that members are aware of Code of Conduct issues as breaches can have significant adverse impact for the Council as well as the individual member.

9. New Code of Conduct for Members

The Committee reviewed and commented on the new model code of conduct, proposing its adoption by Full Council, which took place on 21 May 2007.

10. Matters of Concern

Standards Committee did not minute any matters of concern during the year.

11. Monitoring Officer's Comments

The Monitoring Officer has continued to receive a number of requests from Councillors to advise on whether or not interests are personal, or personal and prejudicial. He welcomes the opportunity to assist members to comply with the Code of Conduct in this way. He also wishes to thank all members and officers involved with the Standards Committee for their assistance over the year.

**APPENDIX: Entries for the year in the Register of Gifts and
Hospitality**