



Annual Return form - 2010

Authority name South Cambridgeshire District Council
Primary contact Steve Hampson
Primary contact email steve.hampson@scambs.gov.uk

PART 1: COMMUNICATION

Annual Report

Does the standards committee produce an annual report?

Yes

What does the report contain?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A personal statement by the standards committee chairman | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information about the members of the standards committee |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The role of the standards committee | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The standards committee terms of reference |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information about the Code of Conduct | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statistical information about complaints that have been received |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information about the length of time taken dealing with complaints | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A summary of complaints which have led to investigation, sanction or other action |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Details about training/events provided | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The forward work plan of the standards committee |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Please describe what "Other" contents are in the report.

Committee recognised nationally for good practice and finalist in Standards & Ethics category at LGC Awards

How is the standards committee annual report circulated?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sent to all senior officers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sent to all members |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sent to parish/town councils | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available on the authority intranet |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available as a specific item on the authority website | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available in the standards committee papers published on the authority website |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Included as a full authority meeting agenda item | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Publicised in local press |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distributed to households | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available at authority offices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not circulated outside of the standards committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

The report is "Available as a specific item on the authority website", please provide the web address.

www.scambs.gov.uk/standards

The report is "Available in the standards committee papers published on the authority website", please provide the web address.

<http://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=415&MIId=5004>

Publicising Complaints

How can the public access information about how to make a complaint against a member?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through a 'compliments and complaints' type section of the council website | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through the standards committee section of the website |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complaints leaflets available from the authority | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Included as part of a council newsletter |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advertised through parish councils | <input type="checkbox"/> Information is not available to the public |

Other

The information is on the "compliments and complaints' type section of the council website", please provide the web address.

http://www.scams.gov.uk/CouncilAndDemocracy/Consultation/complaints_complime

The information is on "standards committee section of the website", please provide the web address.

www.scams.gov.uk/standards

How can the public access information about the outcome of initial assessment decisions?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Written summary available for public inspection | <input type="checkbox"/> All initial assessment decisions are publicised in the local press |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicised in the local press only if the subject member agrees | <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment decisions published on the authority website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Articles published in the authority newsletter | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other |

Please describe the "Other" ways initial assessments are available.

Reported back using case references only to Standards Committee every quarter as part of a chart showing cases received and outcomes - this is available via agenda and website

How can the public access information about the outcome of investigations?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hearings are open to the public | <input type="checkbox"/> All investigation outcomes are publicised in the local press |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Publicised in the local press only if the subject member agrees | <input type="checkbox"/> Published on the authority website |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decision notices are available for public inspection | <input type="checkbox"/> Articles in the authority newsletter |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Please describe the "Other" ways investigation outcomes are available.

Non-breach findings reported back using case references only to Standards Committee every quarter as part of a chart showing cases received and outcomes - this is available via agenda and website. Breach findings will always involve a public hearing.

Do you have a mechanism in place for measuring the satisfaction of all those involved in allegations of misconduct? For example the member, complainant and witnesses.

No

Communicating the role and work of the standards committee and standards generally

What does the authority do to promote the work of the standards committee and standards generally to the rest of the authority (i.e. internally)?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dedicated standards committee pages on intranet | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee has its own newsletter / bulletin |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee issues briefing notes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Articles in employee newsletter / bulletin / newspaper |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee independent members observe other authority meetings | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee independent members contribute to other authority meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Please give further details of the contributions made to other authority meetings.

Standards Committee Chairman has full speaking rights at Full Council meetings. Members of the committee attend other authority meetings such as Corporate Governance, Planning, Scrutiny as observers.

How can the public access information about your standards committee?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dedicated standards committee section on the authority website | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Within 'council and democracy' type section of website |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethical standards issues have been included in the local press / media | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee minutes, agendas, and reports are available to the public |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leaflets and/or posters are placed in public buildings | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Places articles in the authority newsletter / bulletin / other publication |



Standards committee meetings are observed by members of the public



Information is not available to the public



Other

Please provide the web address for the standards committee section on the authority website.

www.scambs.gov.uk/standards

Please provide the web address for information within the council and democracy section of your website.

<http://www.scambs.gov.uk/CouncilAndDemocracy/>

What else does the authority do to promote the work of the standards committee and standards generally to the public and other partners?

The Standards Committee has published newsletters in Autumn 2009, Winter 2009/10 and Spring 2010, which are sent to all parish councils electronically and in hard copy, distributed to all district councillors and are made available on the Standards Committee website. These newsletters (recognised by Standards for England as an example of notable practice) aim to raise the Committee's profile locally, to keep all the parish councils aware of the work the we do and changes to the assessment process, and to provide guidance on the Code of Conduct, often with case studies from other authorities.

Articles about the Standards Committee have appeared in each quarterly issue of South Cambs magazine, introducing the committee and its work to residents, clarifying the roles of the council, independent and parish council representatives, setting out the public's rights to raise issues and emphasising that any complaints will be treated fairly and seriously by an impartial and fully-trained panel. Another article addressed the issue of the MPs' expenses scandal and the absence of a Code of Conduct for MPs, encouraging residents not to assume that all politicians are the same as district and parish councillors often work for little or no money and are bound to uphold the standards and ethics requirements of their Code of Conduct.

In November, the Chairman and Vice- Chairman held a seminar for officers in which they explained the role of the Standards Committee and what the procedure would be if an officer made a complaint about a breach of the Code of Conduct. They took the opportunity to seek officers' views both on the workings of the Standards Committee and on the Council's whistle-blowing policy.

PART 2: INFLUENCE

How does the standards committee communicate ethical issues to the senior figures within your authority (for example the Chief Executive and Leader of the Authority, Party Leaders)?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Formal meetings between standards committee members and senior figures specifically set up to discuss standards | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal discussion on particular standards issues |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior figure attendance at standards committee meetings | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Officer is a member of or attends Corporate Management Team (or equivalent) meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Executive or senior member has portfolio responsibility for standards | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chair (or other standards committee member) addresses full authority meeting(s) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Describe the "Other" communication methods.

The Vice-Chairman of Council is a member of the Standards Committee as is the Convenor of the Independent Group

How do the senior figures in your authority demonstrate strong ethical values?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through a strongly promoted whistle-blowing policy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> By ensuring there are references to ethics in the authority vision / objectives |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrating appropriate behaviours | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior figure(s) makes personal commitment to standards in statements to public/employees |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Through any other method | |

Does your authority have a protocol for partnership working that outlines the standards of behaviour expected of all those working in partnership?

Yes

What mechanisms does the authority use for dealing with member/officer and/or member/member disputes?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal discussion/mediation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Officer mediation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chair of standards committee mediation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior figure mediation (e.g. Chief Executive) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advice from Human Resources department | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Solicitor / legal adviser consulted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Informal hearing | <input type="checkbox"/> No mechanisms other than normal complaints process |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

PART 3: TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010, has the authority assessed the training and development needs of authority members in relation to their responsibilities on standards of conduct?

Yes

If yes, what needs were identified?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Introduction to the Code of Conduct | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elements of the Code of Conduct |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The role and responsibilities of the standards committee | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance/behaviour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other |

Describe the "Other" needs that were identified.

Training on local assessment for standards committee members
Learning about the links between Standards, Corporate Governance & Scrutiny roles for standards committee members
Learning about the role & responsibilities of all types of councillor (parish, district, county) for standards committee members, particularly independent members
Learning about SCDC - its current position and its plans for the future - for standards committee members, particularly independent members
Up to date information on ethical standards issues for members who have already been trained on the Code of Conduct, eg: use of social media
Chairing Skills for Independent members of Standards Committee

What training/support was provided during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Introduction to the Code of Conduct | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elements of the Code of Conduct |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Role and responsibilities of the standards committee | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance/behaviour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other |

Describe the "Other" training/support provided.

Training on local assessment for standards committee members
Training on the links between Standards, Corporate Governance & Scrutiny roles for standards committee members
Training on the role & responsibilities of all types of councillor (parish, district, county) for standards committee members, particularly independent members
Training about SCDC - its current position and its plans for the future - for standards committee members, particularly independent members
Chairing Skills for Independent members of Standards Committee

Who received training/support?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee chair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Independent members |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other standards committee members | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All authority members |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specific authority members with particular needs (e.g. new members, planning committee members) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

What methods were employed to give training/support?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External trainer/speaker |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> One on one training | <input type="checkbox"/> Joint/regional training event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online learning | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Guidance notes/briefing materials |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards for England materials | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance toolkit |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Describe the "Other" methods used.

In which areas of the Code of Conduct has training/support been provided?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Respect | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal/Prejudicial Interests |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use of resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bullying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disrepute | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Predisposition, Pre-determination and bias |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confidentiality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

What other training/support has been provided on areas of an authority member's role or activities they may engage in?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairing skills | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lobbying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Predetermination, Predisposition and bias | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Blogging and/or the use of social media |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Electioneering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Freedom of Information (FOI) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

In general, how well attended was the training provided?

75% or more of those invited

Please give a brief overview of how standards issues are covered in your induction process for new members of the authority?

All new members receive individual training on the Code of Conduct and the role of the Standards Committee as part of the induction process

All new members are also issued with a "Member Toolkit" as part of their induction documentation which contains the Code of Conduct and all other related protocols and guidance notes to help them in their role as Councillor.

In which areas of the role and responsibilities of the standards committee has training/support been provided for standards committee members? Please tick all that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial assessments | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other action/mediation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reviews | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Investigations |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hearings | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sanctions |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Describe what "Other" areas were covered.

Chairing Skills

Media Training

Training on the links between Standards, Corporate Governance & Scrutiny roles

Training on the role & responsibilities of all types of councillor (parish, district, county)

Training about SCDC - its current position and its plans for the future

PART 4: INVESTIGATIONS

Have any investigations been completed during the period 1 April 2009 - 31 March 2010? Yes

How many investigations have been completed during this period?

4

Have any of the investigations used external investigators? No

Of the investigations completed during the period, for how many have external investigators been used?

Nothing selected

Please provide a brief overview of the processes you have in place to ensure the quality of local investigations.

The investigations (three involved the same subject member and were combined into one investigation) were conducted by a member of the council's legal team who had received comprehensive training on the Code of Conduct and how to conduct a local investigation. She was supervised by the Deputy Monitoring Officer who commented on the draft report before it was finalised. The Standards Committee has been extremely satisfied with the quality of the work by our internal investigator.

PART 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

Has your authority provided training for parish councillors during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?

Yes

If yes, what topics did the training cover?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Freedom of Information (FOI) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confidential information |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lobbying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dual-hatted members | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Code of Conduct generally |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal and prejudicial interests | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bullying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

What "Other" topics did the training cover?

Standards Committee Public Meeting Checklist - a self-administered health check for parish clerks

Parish Council Governance Toolkit issued by SCDC in hard copy for all parish councils

Changing role of parish councils and new powers of well-being available

Capacity Building projects

What methods were employed to give training/support?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops) | <input type="checkbox"/> External speakers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One on one training | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joint/regional event |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Guidance notes/briefing materials | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards for England's materials |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CALC speakers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Part of wider parish liaison meeting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

In general, how well attended was the training for parish councillors?

25-50%

Has your authority provided training for parish clerks during the period 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010?

Yes

What topics did the training for parish clerks cover?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Freedom of Information (FOI) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Working with confidential information |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lobbying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dual-hatted members | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Code of Conduct generally |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal and prejudicial interests | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bullying |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

What "Other" topics did parish clerks training cover?

Standards Committee Public Meeting Checklist - a self-administered health check for parish clerks

Parish Council Governance Toolkit issued by SCDC in hard copy for all parish councils

Changing role of parish councils and new powers of well-being available

Capacity Building projects

What methods were employed to give training/support to parish clerks?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> One on one training | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops) |
|---|--|

External speakers

Guidance notes/briefing materials

Standards for England's materials

Joint authority/regional event

Other

What "Other" methods were used?

Standards Committee Newsletter is sent to all parish clerks/councils covering information about the Standards Committee's work (eg. how to apply for a dispensation) and advice on standards issues and information on how to contact committee members and officers.

Standards Committee Public Meeting Checklist - a self-administered health check for parish clerks

Parish Council Governance Toolkit issued by SCDC in hard copy for all parish councils

In general, how well attended was the training for parish clerks?

0-25%

Does your council have a COMPACT (a formal agreement with your county Association of Local Councils about supporting standards for parish and town councils in the area)?

No

Describe the relationship between your authority and your County Association of Local Councils in relation to standards. For example, how regularly do you interact with them? Are you involved in delivering joint training?

We enjoy an excellent working relationship with CPALC (the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Association of Local Councils) .

CPALC is invited to all meetings of Standards Committee and receives our agendas, minutes and newsletters.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer is in regular contact with CPALC on standards issues and meetings are arranged when necessary to discuss standards issues and how best to deliver advice to parishes.

This year's training for parish councils was organised in conjunction with CPALC with speakers from both CPALC and SCDC and was promoted by CPALC.

CPALC is currently helping promote a forthcoming vacancy for a parish council member on the Standards Committee.

SCDC has asked CPALC to intervene in a number of parish council issues over the last year and we have referred to them a number of complaints we have received regarding the administration of parish council meetings for them to take up with the parish clerk/council concerned.

Standards for England and Teesside University are currently researching the role of the Parish Liaison Officer. Teesside University have created a brief questionnaire to assess the organisational background, functions and skills needed to carry out the Parish Liaison role. Does your authority have a Parish Liaison Officer?

No - but there is someone who fulfils the same functions

Does the Parish Liaison Officer (or the person who fulfils the same functions) consent for the University of Teesside to contact them to complete a brief questionnaire about their role?

Yes

If yes, please provide contact details (where there are multiple Parish Liaison Officers, just provide one contact):

Name

Linda Browne

Contact address

South Cambridgeshire District Council, South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne CB23 6EA

Contact phone

01954 713477

Email address

linda.browne@scambs.gov.uk

What steps have you taken when dealing with parishes which have had problems with standards issues? For example, what preventative or capacity building work have you done with parishes?

We have established a Standards Committee Parish Liaison Working Group who are currently surveying all parish councils on their understanding of Code of Conduct issues along with how they are currently running their parish council meetings. The responses will inform the work plan of the Standards Committee for next year to ensure that effective training is delivered.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer receives at least two or three queries each week from parish councillors or clerks about standards related issues and gives advice as necessary. We have involved CPALC in addressing some parish council matters outside of the standards complaints process.

We took the step of issuing hard copies of the Parish Governance Toolkit to all parish councils (90 of them) with the aim of giving them a useful source of guidance on parish council issues and have received positive feedback about how useful this document is. The Standards Committee also decided to produce a Public Meeting Checklist following some concerns being raised about how parish council meetings were being administered at some parish councils and have also received positive feedback about this.

Which of the following areas would you like Standards for England to produce additional guidance on to support your work with parishes?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lobbying | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Predetermination and bias |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and interests | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dual-hatted members |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Please describe what "Other" areas you would like covered.

It would be useful to have some dedicated parish council guidance on all the above areas which deal specifically with the parish council experience.

Employment matters relating to the clerk/other employees and how to ensure treatment of their staff does not end up as a Code of Conduct complaint.

Administration of meetings - it would be useful for parishes to have some guidance from an external source about how to comply with good governance requirements, including the need to have an effective complaints procedure within each parish council.

End of form