

Annual Return 2010 – Questions & Draft Answers

Part 1: Communication

Question	Cherwell's Response
1) Does the Standards Committee produce an annual report?	Yes
2) What does the report contain?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the Members of the Standards Committee (new appointments only) • The role of the Standards Committee • Information about the Code of Conduct • Statistical information about complaints that have been received • A summary of complaints which have led to investigation, sanction, or other action • Details about training/events provided • Information on number of times Committee and Sub-Committee met • Information on complaints to Local Government Ombudsman • Information on how to access info on Member Expenses
3) How is the Standards Committee annual report circulated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent to all Members • Sent to parish/town councils • Available as a specific item on the authority website • Available in the Standards Committee papers published on the authority website • Included as a full authority meeting agenda item
4) How can the public access information about how to make a complaint against a Member?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the Standards Committee section of the website • Complaints leaflet available from the authority

5) How can the public access information about the outcome of initial assessment decisions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written summary available for public inspection • Assessment decisions published on the authority website
6) How can the public access information about the outcome of investigations?	To date, Cherwell have had three investigations and these have been available on the website with the agenda for the Standards Committee meeting at which they were considered.
7) 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 formal mechanism though feedback is received.
9) 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)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards Committee issues briefing notes • Articles in Member Weekly Bulletin
10) How can the public access information about your Standards Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards Committee minutes, agendas, and reports are available to the public • Standards Committee meetings are observed by members of the public
11) What else does the authority do to promote the work of the Standards Committee and Standards generally to the public and other partners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical Framework Questionnaire • Proposing to visit parishes who have asked specifically for more support

Part 2: Influence

12) 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)?	Monitoring Officer attends Corporate Management Team meetings Independent members have lunch with the Chief Executive annually to discuss standards issues.
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13) How do the Senior figures in your authority demonstrate strong ethical values?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating appropriate behaviours • Declaration of acceptance of Office
14) Does your authority have a protocol for partnership working that outlines the Standards of behaviour expected of all those working in partnership?	<p>Yes</p> <p>(Cherwell is currently developing support to Members on Partnerships/Outside bodies. This is being led by a Portfolio Holder).</p>

Part 3: Training & Support

16) 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
18) If yes, what needs were identified?	<p>None</p> <p>(The Chairman has done a PDP which identified more to do with the role/structure of the Council and the decision making process)</p>
19) What training/support was provided during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the Code of Conduct • Elements of the Code of Conduct • Ethical governance/behaviour induction • Chairing and Meeting procedures training (open to Chairman/Vice-Chairman)
20) Who received training/support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards Committee Chair • Independent Members • Other Standards Committee Members
21) What methods were employed to give training/support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal training • External trainer/speaker • Guidance notes/briefing materials/use of Standards for

	England DVD
22) In which areas of the Code of Conduct has training/support been provided?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal/Prejudicial Interests • Predisposition, Pre-determination and bias • General Code of Conduct • Assessment of Complaints
23) What other training/support has been provided on areas of an authority Member's role or activities they may engage in?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairing Skills • Pre-determination, Predisposition and bias • Freedom of Information (FOI) • Full training programme for Members of the authority
24) In general, how well attended was the training provided?	50-75%
25) Please give a brief overview of how Standards issues are covered in your induction process for new Members of the authority?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and Code of Conduct workshop led by Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer. • Part of the Planning Workshop focuses on predetermination, bias and declaration of interests. • Meeting procedure training also covers declarations of interest.
26) In which areas of the role and responsibilities of the Standards Committee has training/support been provided for Standards Committee Members?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Assessments • Other action/mediation <p>(All of above plus Investigations, Hearings and Sanctions have been covered in County-wide training)</p>

Part 4: Investigations

27) How many investigations have been conducted during the period 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010?	One
28) Of the investigations completed during the period, for how many have external investigators been used?	One

29) Overall, what was your principle reason for out-sourcing the investigation(s)?	The reason for outsourcing was lack of resource internally and as it was a district councillor being investigated (although at Town Council level) it was not thought appropriate for an officer of Cherwell to undertake the investigation.
30) What type of external investigator(s) did you use?	Employee of another authority
31) For the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010, what was the approximate total cost of fees paid to the external investigators(s)?	£4813.20

Part 5: Relationships with Parish and Town Councils

33) Has your authority provided training for parish councillors during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?	Yes
34) If yes, what topics did the training cover?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • The Code of Conduct generally • Chairing Skills • Meeting Procedures • Parish Liaison Meeting • Parish Clerks meeting (covering areas such as Minute writing, co-option, effective responses to planning applications)
35) What methods were employed to give training/support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal training • Part of wider Parish Liaison Meeting
36) In general, how well attended was the training for parish councillors?	
37) Has your authority provided training for parish clerks during the period 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010?	Yes (New clerks event). This is a new initiative starting in March 2010 to run for a two year period across Oxfordshire

38) What topics did the training for parish clerks cover?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom of information • Working with confidential information • Minute taking • Planning <p>These are the scheduled topics so far</p>
39) If yes, what methods were employed to give training/support to parish clerks?	Joint authority/Oxfordshire event
42) 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?	A representative from this authority attends the meeting with the OALC which takes place every six months. We discuss joint training and the new clerks event arose from agreement that the turnover of new clerks was too high.
43) 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?	Yes
44) 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
45) 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?	In Cherwell's experience, code of conduct complaints concerning parish councils are rooted in governance issues. Cherwell recently undertook a review of a parish council, where officers reviewed their governance procedures and made recommendation as to how the council could operate better. This review was conducted in an attempt to prevent the governance issue escalating into a code of conduct complaint.