



Annual Return form - 2010

Authority name Lancaster City Council
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PART 1: COMMUNICATION

Annual Report

Does the standards committee produce an annual report?

Yes

What does the report contain?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Information about the Code of Conduct | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statistical information about complaints that have been received |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information about the length of time taken dealing with complaints | <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Other | |

How is the standards committee annual report circulated?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sent to all senior officers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sent to all members |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sent to parish/town councils | <input type="checkbox"/> Available on the authority intranet |
| <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Publicised in local press |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distributed to households | <input type="checkbox"/> Available at authority offices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not circulated outside of the standards committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

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

<http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/comments-complaints/complain>

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 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 type="checkbox"/> Advertised through parish councils | <input type="checkbox"/> Information is not available to the public |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

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

<http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/comments-complaints/complain>

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 type="checkbox"/> Other |

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 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.

Please note that the Council has not had any hearings to date. The only completed investigation resulted in a finding of no breach which was accepted by the Committee. If a hearing were held, the outcome would be publicised by press release and on the Council's website.

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

Please describe the "Other" methods used.

Information on standards, including Standards for England Guidance is posted on the area of the intranet that is for members (ie dedicated members' page rather than dedicated standards committee page)

The Committee reports to full Council or Council Business Committee as appropriate on its recommendations for Protocols included in the Council's Constitution.

How can the public access information about your standards committee?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated standards committee section on the authority website | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Within 'council and democracy' type section of website |
| <input 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 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standards committee meetings are observed by members of the public | <input type="checkbox"/> Information is not available to the public |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

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

http://committeeadmin./lancaster.gov.uk/mgCommittee_Details.aspx?ID=299

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

Questions on ethical standards and governance issues are included in the Council's Partnership Development and Evaluation Toolkit. The evaluations have informed the ongoing work of officers, and progress has been made inter alia to ensure that partners

are clear about their roles and responsibilities both individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and to the Council, that there is clarity about the legal status of the partnership and that partners understand and are committed to good governance principles, including protocols to ensure that standards of conduct between the Council and its partners are defined and communicated.

The Council is developing a Code of Practice for working in partnership.

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 type="checkbox"/> Formal meetings between standards committee members and senior figures specifically set up to discuss standards | <input type="checkbox"/> Informal discussion on particular standards issues |
| <input 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 Chair of Standards has indicated that he is always willing to meet with the Leader, Group Leaders and/or Chief Executive if there are relevant issues to discuss, but no such meeting has been felt necessary during this year

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through a strongly promoted whistle-blowing policy | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through any other method | |

Describe the "Other" ways that this is achieved.

By ensuring that advice on code of conduct issues, and especially the declaration of interests, is proactively given in advance of decision making.

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 type="checkbox"/> Chair of standards committee mediation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior figure mediation (e.g. Chief Executive) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advice from Human Resources department | <input 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?

No

If no, please give your reasons why?

The issue of training was considered, but it was decided not to assess training and development needs until the publication of the revised Code of Conduct, which was thought at that time to be imminent.. However, the Code is still awaited. The Council has full elections every four years (next elections 2011), so there was no need to consider induction training this year

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

Describe the "Other" training/support provided.

Assessment training for standards committee (SfE DVD Assessment Made Clear)
Training for Dual-hatted members provided by SfE at event organised by South Lakeland District Council..

Support is provided on an ongoing basis to individual members on the declaration of interests.

Who received training/support?

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

Which "Other" people received training?

Support was provided to any relevant Members on interest issues as and when those issues arose.

What methods were employed to give training/support?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops) | <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Standards for England materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance toolkit |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Describe the "Other" methods used.

Specific advice given to individual members on interest matters particularly affecting them.

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

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

Describe the "Other" areas covered.

An overview of the whole Code of Conduct on a one to one basis for new member following by-election.

Support provided on declaration of interests as and when required.

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

Describe the "Other" training/support provided.

IT skills and use of laptops, Sustainability, Local Area Agreements, Community Cohesion, LDLSP and Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Government Finance and Budgeting, Overview of Local Chinese Community and Culture.

In general, how well attended was the training provided?

50-75%

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

Elections are every 4 years (next due in 2011). Following the 2007 elections, mandatory code of conduct training sessions were provided, and specific training for Standards Committee members.

One to one sessions are provided for new members following by-elections.

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

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?

1

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.

There has only been one investigation completed to date. It was undertaken by an in-house solicitor and closely monitored by the Monitoring Officer.

A number of Council solicitors have attended investigation training organised by Eden District Council.

Informal feedback from the Standards Committee once it has considered an investigation report is taken into account for the future..

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 type="checkbox"/> Freedom of Information (FOI) | <input type="checkbox"/> Confidential information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planning | <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Bullying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

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 type="checkbox"/> Guidance notes/briefing materials | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards for England's materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CALC speakers | <input type="checkbox"/> Part of wider parish liaison meeting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

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

75% or more of those invited

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

No

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?

A senior officer of the Council attends meetings of the Lancashire Association of Local Councils (Lancaster branch) held every two months. The officer sits in a liaison role to ensure City Council engagement with the parishes. Other officers attend to present to the parishes issues of common interest. This includes training where required.

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

Richard Tulej

Contact address

Town Hall, Lancaster LA1 1PJ

Contact phone

01524582079

Email address

RTulej@lancaster.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?

Code of Conduct training provided after last elections in 2007 and for newly created parish council in 2009. Officer support given to the newly created parish council. Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer are readily available to parish clerks to provide advice.

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

Lobbying

Predetermination and bias

Planning and interests

Dual-hatted members

Other

End of form