

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: The Monitoring Officer

REPORT NUMBER **J216**

TO: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: 7 April 2010

ACTIONS FOLLOWING THE ETHICAL GOVERNANCE AUDIT

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To report on ideas and suggestions for the promotion and delivery of the principles and values of good governance within the Council.

2. **RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**

2.1 That the Committee approves the suggestions set out in the Table at paragraph 5.3 of this Report for the future promotion of the values of good governance within the authority.

2.2 That Members contribute and consider any further ideas to fulfil the criteria set out in the Table at paragraph 5.3.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There will be nominal cost attributed to the production and circulation of an A5 poster described in paragraph 5.3. Costs will be limited by the use of the weekly Parish/Town Council circulation and design/production of the leaflet in-house.

4. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

4.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Significant Business Risk No. 7 (Financial, Performance and Risk management). Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Seriousness or Impact	Mitigation Measures
The Committee fails to deliver against key issues on which it is audited	Low	Low	Ongoing review throughout the year on steps taken to promote the ethical framework

5. **KEY INFORMATION**

5.1 On 16 October 2009, the Committee received Report J115 which set out details of the Council's external audit of the ethical framework and culture within the Council as part of the 'Use of Resources Assessment'. The Committee has a pivotal role in delivering the measures required to demonstrate that the Council operates and promotes high ethical standards and there were a number of action areas identified from the audit in which the Council would wish to improve or maintain momentum. These eight areas were set out in Report J115 and are duplicated in the table below for ease of reference.

5.2 Since the meeting on 16 October, Mr J G Watson and the Monitoring Officer have met to discuss possible initiatives and examples that could be provided in future and these are set out against each of the eight categories in the table.

5.3

1	<p>Provide examples that demonstrate that the leadership sets the tone by creating a climate of openness, support and respect, promotes a strong ethical culture and upholds the values of good governance.</p> <p><i>Actions taken/suggestions:</i> <i>Andrew Hunkin, Director of Corporate Services attended the Standards Committee meeting on 22.1.10 at the invitation of the Chairman to report on ethical governance within the Council and steps taken to raise awareness for staff in particular.</i></p> <p><i>Members of Management Team be invited to attend Standards Committee from time to time to report on measures being taken in furtherance of this criteria.</i></p>
2	<p>Provide examples that demonstrate how the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive are recognised as good role models and known to proactively promote the ethical agenda, both inside and outside the council.</p> <p><i>Suggestion:</i> <i>The CEO/Chairman of Strategy Committee be invited to endorse the content of the newsletter proposed in 5. below.</i></p>
3	<p>Provide examples that demonstrate how the Standards Committee advises the leadership on how it can impact positively on staff and public confidence and trust in the organisation.</p> <p><i>Suggestion:</i> <i>After the Committee has appointed its Chairman in April 2010 for the ensuing year, that the Chairman writes to all Chairmen of the Council with an offer for representatives of the Committee to attend committee meetings and provide feedback. The letter would be copied to Management Team.</i></p> <p><i>The Chairman of Standards Committee offer to attend occasional Political Leaders' Group meetings for the first item on the agenda to make suggestions and answer any questions.</i></p>

4	<p>Provide examples that demonstrate how the council monitors compliance with its codes and procedures, and reports the findings and any action taken, to the whole council, these include; the Code of Conduct; registers of interest, gifts and hospitality; code of practice for IT resources; Standing Orders and Financial Regulations; and Procurement Procedures</p> <p><i>Actions taken:</i> <i>The Committee has kept the Council's codes and protocols under regular review. Declaration of interests and gifts and hospitality are considered at every Standards Committee meeting.</i></p> <p><i>Members are reminded annually by Committee Services to ensure that their Register of Interests is up-to-date.</i></p>
5	<p>Provide examples that demonstrate how the council communicates progress made in developing the ethical environment to stakeholders and to local people and communities.</p> <p><i>Actions taken/suggestion:</i> <i>The Suffolk Monitoring Officers Group is In addition to its Annual Report to Full Council (which is published on the Council's website), to produce a 6 monthly update in the form of a newsletter containing a message from the Chairman to be circulated to all members and placed on the Council's website.</i></p>
6	<p>Provide examples that demonstrate that the council embeds a strong ethical culture.</p> <p><i>Actions taken/suggestion:</i> <i>Co-opted members attend random meetings of the Council to observe proceedings from the top table and report back to the Committee.</i></p> <p><i>Increase the profile of the Standards Committee by expanding its web page to include photographs of Committee members</i></p>
7	<p>Provide examples to demonstrate that Members and staff have high levels of awareness of, and confidence in, the whistle-blowing arrangements.</p> <p><i>Actions taken/suggestion:</i> <i>Provision has been made within the Code of Conduct complaint form for anonymity to be requested and granted in certain circumstances.</i></p> <p><i>The Committee to consider whether, and if so how, anonymity for conduct complaints should be highlighted to staff.</i></p>

8	<p>Provide examples that demonstrate that complaints information is used to inform service improvement/adjustment.</p> <p><i>Actions taken/suggestion:</i> <i>The Committee has in 2009/10 adopted and issued guidance notes on (1) member conduct at site inspections, and (2) predetermination & bias, following the submission of complaints.</i></p> <p><i>In view of the number and type of complaints concerning parish councils, the Committee has identified that improvements may be secured through the training of clerks. Training for clerks, focussing on common complaint areas, was delivered in September 2009.</i></p> <p><i>At the end of each municipal year for the Committee to receive a report on the general nature of complaints received and to identify any actions that can be taken to avoid repetition of the complaint.</i></p>
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6. **APPENDICES**

None

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:**

None

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