

Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
**All Wards (Corporate Issue)**

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**  
**Standards Committee**

**31 October 2002**

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**OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE'S CURRENT ROLE AND WAYS OF RAISING ITS PROFILE**

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**Report of the Town Clerk and Director of Resources,  
Access and Diversity**

**1. Purpose of Report**

To review the current role of the Standards Committee and ways in which its profile can be raised.

**2. Summary**

The Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee are defined within the Council's Constitution.

As Regulations are introduced, through the National Standards Board, the role of the Committee is becoming clearer, but also, in certain areas, more prescribed.

An examination of the work of Standards Committees in other authorities has shown that virtually all are 'feeling their way' and that the work pattern of Leicester's Committee is typical of the national picture.

Linked to that picture is a need to also raise the profile of the Standards Committee within the Council, both with Members and officers.

**3. Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to comment upon the proposals, detailed in the attached supporting report, to raise the profile of the Committee, both with Members and officers.

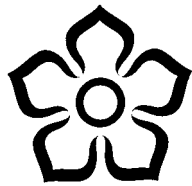
**4. Headline Financial and Legal Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

The Standards Committee now operates within the legislative provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 and associated Regulations. The Terms of Reference of the Committee within the Council's Constitution reflect those legislative requirements.

**5. Report Author/Officer to contact:**

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## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1. Report**

#### **(i) Overview of Current Role**

The current roles and responsibilities of the Standards Committee are defined in the Committee's Terms of Reference within the Council's Constitution. These are attached at Appendix A.

The City Council's Standards Committee was established in advance of the formation of the Standards Board for England. At that time, it was in order for the Standards Committee, amongst other items, to consider and, as appropriate, conduct Hearings concerning complaints made against Elected Members. Since the introduction of Regulations (which is currently ongoing) by the Standards Board for England under the Local Government Act 2000, the role of the Standards Committee has, in terms of complaints handling, become more prescribed. As detailed in a further report on the Agenda of the Committee, expected 'Section 66' Regulations are likely to further change the role of the Committee in respect of consideration of complaints against Elected Members.

Examination of the work of Standards Committees across the country has shown that other Standards Committees are experiencing similar issues, reflected by the cancellation of meetings due to lack of business, 'thin' agendas and reports being submitted for note rather than for action.

Nevertheless, putting aside the legislative requirement, there seems a generally accepted underlying view that the existence of Standards Committees are

inherently beneficial, not least as an affirmation and guardian of the Authority's probity and standards of ethical conduct.

## 2. Profile Raising

In order for the Committee to fulfil its role to best effect, it is important that a strategy is developed which ensures that an appropriate degree of profile is maintained within the Council at all times. The key elements to be incorporated within the Strategy are recommended as follows:-

### (i) Training and Development of Members

As described in a further report on the Agenda of the Committee, training and development in issues of probity and ethical standards for Members, Co-opted Members, officers and those involved in partnership working within the Council is a key element of the Committee's remit. Such training, of itself, will help significantly to raise the profile of the Committee. Fully recognising the time commitment which would ensue, the continued attendance and participation of one or more Members of the Committee at these training events would maintain a powerful message to those participating.

### (ii) Audit of Probity and Integrity

Members will be aware that the Council is now required to regularly review and report upon its arrangements in the area of Corporate Governance. This includes not only legislative requirements but also the promotion of best practice. Issues of probity, integrity and standards are an integral thread in numerous elements of this Corporate Governance.

As part of the Corporate Governance review process, it is recommended that the Standards Committee fulfil the role of 'Audit Committee for Standards', which would require them to formally sign off the probity and integrity elements of corporate governance, having received and examined documentary evidence in support of the Audit view being put forward.

### (iii) Dispensations

The responsibility for the issue of dispensations by the Standards Committee is dealt with elsewhere on the Agenda for this meeting. This function, of itself, will also act to raise the profile of the Committee in the eyes of Members.

### (iv) Standards Bulletins

To provide a regular channel of information and communication, it is recommended that the Committee also consider the issues of a regular Standards Bulletin (approximately 3 times a year) to both update Members and officers on changes to legislation, Regulation and procedure and also

give guidance on day to day issues – for example different facets of declared interests - personal and prejudicial.

(v) Annual Report to Council

Members of the Committee may wish to consider whether or not an Annual Report of the Committee to Council would be of benefit. Although Reports to Council from the Committee on particular issues may be forthcoming, these are unlikely to be on a regular basis and may also be of a somewhat 'negative' nature, e.g. reporting on issues relating to a Member's conduct. An Annual Report to the Council would serve to bring the Committee's proactive approval to matters of probity and integrity before all Members.

## **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **1. Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this Report.

### **2. Legal Implications**

The Standards Committee now operates within the legislative provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 and associated Regulations. The Terms of Reference of the Committee within the Council's Constitution reflect those legislative requirements.

### **3. Other Implications**

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References Within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	<b>No</b>	
Policy	<b>No</b>	
Sustainable and Environmental	<b>No</b>	
Crime and Disorder	<b>No</b>	
Human Rights Act	<b>No</b>	
Elderly/People on Low Income	<b>No</b>	

### **4. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972**

None.

### **5. Consultations**

None.

### **6. Report Author**

Charles Poole  
Service Director (Democratic Services) - extn. 7015

STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To oversee and promote the arrangements to be made by the Council to promote probity and maintain the highest standards in the conduct of business by members (including co-opted members) and officers.
2. To oversee and promote observance of the Members and Officers' Code of Conduct and Political Conventions.
3. To advise on the adoption or revision of the Council's Political Conventions and monitor their operation.
4. To oversee and ensure the provision of appropriate training to Members and officers to enable them to adhere at all times to the provisions of the Codes and Conventions.
5. To consider and determine matters referred to the Council by the National Standards Board following investigation on its behalf.
6. To consider and determine matters relating to the conduct of Members raised directly with the Council.
7. To refer to the National Standards Board matters relating to the conduct of Members as the Committee deems appropriate and/or in accordance with national legislation and guidance.
8. To provide dispensations in accordance with national guidance and legislation.