

TO: Standards Committee
DATE: 6th November 2007
SUBJECT: Monitoring Officer Report
BY: Corporate Services Director
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This is an update of my first annual report of activities relating to my role as Monitoring Officer. This is considered to be good practice by the Audit Commission and was requested by them following their annual governance report last year.

Implications: There are potential resource implications arising from the change in the standards regime in April 2008. However, it is difficult to estimate the demands that will be placed on the Council as it is not possible to anticipate the number of complaints referred. Based on numbers to date in 2007 and previous years trends I would expect to be able to accommodate this workload within existing resources. I will keep the situation under close review.

Decision Required: To review aspects of the Monitoring Officer role carried out in 2007 and to consider areas for future attention

Introduction and Background

1. I made my first Annual Report, as Monitoring Officer for Swale Borough Council, to this Committee on 28th February 2007. The purpose of the report is not only to provide an overview of Monitoring work in the past year, but also to provide an opportunity to review and learn from experience. The production of such a report is now considered to be good practice by the Audit Commission. This report therefore sets out the Monitoring Officer's statutory responsibilities and summaries how several of these duties have been discharged since the earlier meeting and seeks to draw Members' attention to some of the more significant issues that may require attention.

THE ROLE OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

2. The role of the Monitoring Officer derives from the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Act requires local authorities to appoint a Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer has a broad role in ensuring the lawfulness and fairness of Council decision-making, ensuring compliance with Codes and Protocols, promoting good governance and high ethical standards. A Summary of the Monitoring Officer's functions is as follows:

Description	Source
Report on contraventions or likely contraventions of any enactment or rule of law	Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Report on any maladministration or injustice where the Ombudsman has carried out an investigation	Local Government and Housing Act 1989

Appoint a Deputy.	Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Establish and maintain the Register of Members' interests, and the register of gifts and Hospitality.	Local Government Act 2000
Report on sufficiency of resources	Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Maintain the Constitution	The Constitution
Support the Standards Committee. Promote and maintain high standards of conduct.	Local Government Act 2000
Receive reports from Ethical Standards Officers and Case Tribunals.	Local Government Act 2000
Consulting with, supporting and advising the Head of Paid Service and Chief Finance Officer on issues of lawfulness and probity.	The Constitution
Receive referrals from Ethical Standards officers for local Investigations	Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination) Regulations 2003
Advice on whether executive decisions are within the budget and policy framework	The Constitution
Provide advice on vices issues, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity Budget and Policy Framework issues to all members.	The Constitution
Legal Advisor to the Standards Committee when carrying out a local Determination Hearing	Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination) Regulations 2003
Issuing Dispensations to Members regarding prejudicial interests	The Standards Committee

Constitutional Review and Revision

3. The Constitution sets out how the Council operates and how decisions are made. It sets out the procedures which are followed to ensure that these decisions are efficient, transparent and that those who make the decisions are accountable to local people. The Monitoring Officer is the guardian of the Council's Constitution and is responsible for ensuring that the Constitution operates efficiently, is properly maintained and is adhered to.

4. A review of the Constitution took place in September 2005 and pages have been updated and reissued as and when necessary (for example, when a Scrutiny Panel was disbanded and when the Executive portfolios were reviewed). As a result, the Constitution now reflects the revised Executive Portfolios and is more closely aligned to Member arrangements. The second major area of update was the Scheme of Approved Delegations. This was a very important piece of work, representing as it does the formal framework by which the Council

authorises officers to act on its behalf. It is important for the Council that this is current and up-to-date, as there can be occasions when the Council may be called on to evidence that officers were in fact empowered to act on a range of regulatory and operational matters.

5. The Council has recently been considering how to improve further its decision-making processes. **It is intended that the move towards a high performing organisation as set out in the Corporate Plan will be accompanied by a thorough review of the Constitution and the Scheme of delegation which supports it.**

LAWFULNESS AND MALADMINISTRATION

6 The Monitoring Officer is the Council's lead adviser on issues of lawfulness and the Council's powers and in consultation with the Head of Paid Service and Chief Financial Officer advises on compliance with the Budget and Policy Framework. Part of this role involves monitoring reports, agendas and decisions to ensure compliance with legislation and the Constitution. At the heart of this work is the agenda of and reports to the Executive. Executive reports and decisions are made publicly available for Councillors either electronically or by way of a paper version. Executive decisions can also be viewed by Members of the public through the Council's website: www.swale.gov.uk/dso

7. The Executive has met on six occasions since February 2007. In each case the Management Team had reviewed the agenda and associated draft reports. This clearance process is an important part of ensuring corporate working in an effective Council and provides a vital opportunity to discuss aspects of reports or decisions that require 'buy-in' from, or have implications across, services. All Heads of Service receive draft agendas and Finance, HR and Legal officers have the opportunity to contribute to reports under 'Implications'. Management Team undertook a review of this process recently and has introduced revised arrangements. Management Team will be formally reviewing the Forward Plan as a standing item on its agenda and will be seeking advice from the Head of Organisational Development, Head of Finance and the Head of Legal as appropriate. This enables Management Team to review early in the process reports to be presented to the Executive. It is anticipated that this will enhance reporting through earlier input and discussion, including value for money considerations and ensure that a clear set of recommendations are presented to the Executive for consideration.

8. The report template asks officers to consider the following implications: -

- Human resources
- Financial
- Legal
- Crime and disorder (section 17)
- Equalities and Diversity
- Sustainability
- Risk

9. Ultimately, if the Monitoring Officer considers that any proposal, decision or omission would give rise to unlawfulness or if any decision or omission has given rise to maladministration a report must be submitted to the Full Council or, where appropriate, the Executive after first consulting with the Head of Paid Service and Chief Financial Officer. Any proposal or decision that is subject to such a report cannot be implemented until the report has been considered.

10. The sound governance arrangements operated by the Council ensure that the power to report potentially unlawful decision-making is rarely, if ever, used. The Monitoring Officer has not had to issue such a report throughout 2005/2006 or indeed during the last 10 years. In September 2007 I had to report to Council on a procedural matter arising from the Mayor's refusal to accept a motion submitted under Standing Order 12 on the grounds that the Motion could albeit unwittingly interfere with or frustrate the proper process of disciplinary proceedings. I was also concerned about potential disclosure of personal data and the prejudicial impact on the rights of the persons involved.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND CODE OF CONDUCT

11. The Monitoring Officer has a pro-active role in ensuring good practice, good procedures and good governance. During the year I have sought to advise a number of Members who have approached me, and a few who have not. Where I have seen evidence which tests the boundary of good governance I have sought to engage both the individual Member and Group Leaders to ensure that there is some discussion and shared ownership of where the correct threshold of acceptable or appropriate conduct or good governance lies. This dialogue will continue and I remain grateful for the support of Group Leaders in discussions on these issues. I am also pleased to record that the occasions where I have sought to this have been very few.

12. Where I feel there is a wider issue involved I always seek to keep members informed. In September 2007 I issued additional advice to members on predisposition, predetermination or bias and the Code.

13. Good governance involves providing procedure notes, guidance, developing and implementing protocols and providing briefings and enabling effective support to Councillors in their different roles including Member training. The purpose of these briefing notes is to provide readily accessible reference materials for members. In addition all briefing notes received from the Standards Board are sent to all members.

14. During June 2007 training on the new Code of Conduct was arranged for all members and given by DMH Stallard covering the following topics:

- Ethics and Probity for Local Government Councillors
- Introduction to the Standards Machinery
- Personal and Prejudicial Interests
- Gifts and Hospitality
- Top Tips

15. A comprehensive induction session was arranged for new and re-elected members in May 2007. This welcomed members to the Council, introduced Management Team and the different areas covered by the Council, as well as emphasising where to go for advice and the dates of subsequent training sessions.

16. The main tasks for the year have been:

- Implementation of the new Code of Conduct. Swale Borough Council has agreed to operate under the Model Code of Conduct without amendment.
- Updating all the register of interests for all Swale and Parish Councillors. This work was necessary as a direct consequence of agreeing to the new Code of Conduct

- Consideration of the implications of the Local Government White Paper. The Council's Head of Policy circulated a detailed briefing note on this subject. The Bill has yet to become law and is currently in the due parliamentary process.
- Promoting and encouraging joined up working and better governance arrangements. This is subject to a separate report from the Head of Audit. At the Standards Committees Assembly in Birmingham (referred to later in the report) the importance of the third principle relating to standards and governance was reemphasised as a demonstration of how governance and standards is at the heart of service delivery.

REPORTS FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN

17. The annual letter for the year ended 31st March 2007 from the Local Government Ombudsman sets out his reflections on the complaints received against this authority and dealt with by his office over the last year. These were as follows:

18. He received 17 complaints in 2006/07, a slight decrease on the previous year, with the majority about planning. Complaints about planning now constitute the largest group although the number remains small. Complaints about housing benefits fell to just one, reflecting the Council's success in improving its service.

19. The Ombudsman made 19 decisions during the year – with a finding of no maladministration in 5 and 7 were outside his jurisdiction. When he completes an investigation he must issue a report. There are a significant proportion of investigations that do not reach this stage. This is because these are settled during the course of the investigation. These are known as 'local determinations'. No reports were issued against the council last year and five complaints were settled, three of which related to planning applications, one to a housing benefit case and one in respect of noise nuisance.

20. The Ombudsman was disappointed to note that the average time for responding to complaints lodged with him had been skewed by the response to two planning complainants which meant the average response time was 48 days. Without these the average would have been comfortably within the target average of 28 days. We are now doing all we can to reduce the time taken to respond to first enquiries.

THE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK AND SUPPORT TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

21. As lead Officer for the Standards Committee and the Ethical Framework the Monitoring Officer has a key role in facilitating, promoting the Council's Ethical Framework and in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct within the authority. As well as policy development and implementation this also involves advising Members and Officers including those within the Parish/Town Councils on propriety issues, advising the Standards Committee on applications for dispensations and advising the Standards Committee when they determine an allegation of misconduct on the part of a Member including a Member from a Parish/Town Council. Investigations may also be referred to the Monitoring Officer from an Ethical Standards Officer for the Standards Board for England. The maintenance of the Registers of Interests for the District, as well as the Parish/Town Councils, is also the responsibility of the Monitoring Officer, as is the Register of Hospitality.

22. In the period to end October 2007, the Standards Committee met once to consider the following:-

- **Consultation on amendments to the model code of conduct for local authorities**
- **Monitoring officer report**

23. Three of the cases referred to parish council procedural and administration issues. The Standards Board for England commented that they do not generally have jurisdiction over the rules of conduct of local authority meetings. They also commented that a robust debate is part and parcel of the 'rough and tumble of politics'. The Standards Board for England will only refer for investigation the most serious cases. Allegations of simple name-calling or mildly rude and inappropriate behaviour is not considered serious enough to meet this threshold.

24. In one of the other cases the Standards Board for England made it clear that it is not there to consider matters relating to quality of work undertaken by members. The evidence presented did not support the complainant's view of misconduct. The nub of the issue was that the complainant remained dissatisfied with members' conclusions.

25. As yet no complaint under the new revised working arrangements has been referred to the Council's Monitoring Officer by an Ethical Standards Officer. During the year to date I was made aware of 5 cases relating to Swale that were referred to the Standards Board for England. None of the five cases were investigated.

MAINTAINING REGISTER OF MEMBER INTERESTS

26. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for establishing and maintaining a Register of Members interests for the District, Parish/Town Councils. The District Parish/Town Council Register of Members interests are held by the Personal Assistant to the Director of Corporate Services, Governance and Scrutiny. They are updated periodically as Members advise, and through the Parish/Town Clerk, as well as on an annual basis. An Audit of Register of Interests has been conducted. There were a number of recommendations which have been actioned:

- **Reminding and raising awareness amongst staff of the Council's rules and regulations set out in Corporate policies, regulations and guidance** – letter to all staff May 2007, further advice on interests in contracts issued in July 2007
- **Incorporating the Officer's code of Conduct into the Constitution** – actioned in May 2007
- **Administration of the registers of interest** – escalation process revised. A proportionate targeted approach was adopted for new members.
- **Automation of system** –under consideration, a proportionate approach is considered best.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

27. The Constitution now includes a Code for Employees. We had been awaiting the development of a National Code but this has not progressed as anticipated. I issued revised advice to all members of staff in May 2007 and provided them with a copy of the Code of Conduct which covers, amongst other things:

- Standards
- Personal Interest
- Disclosure of Information
- Appointments and other employment matters

- Political Impartiality
- Relationships
- Discrimination and Equal opportunity
- Separation of roles during tendering
- Corruption
- Use of financial resources
- Gifts and Hospitality
- Sponsorship – giving and receiving
- Equipment and Materials
- Outside employment and activities
- Procedures for dealing with breaches

28. It was originally anticipated that there would be a need to review the Code for Employees. We undertook research amongst the high performing authorities to test whether our Code was 'fit for purpose'. I found that the majority had a Code similar to the Council's and were not considering revising theirs. I have decided to hold this matter in abeyance for the time being as there may well be opportunities for some Partnership working to achieve a model Code across the county. **This matter should be kept under review.**

OVERSEEING REGISTRATION OF OFFICER INTERESTS

29. The Monitoring Officer writes to Councillors, Officers of the Management Team or on certain salary grades, or appointed by statute, each year and asks them to complete and sign an annual declaration on related party transactions.

30. This captures transactions between the individual; members of the individual's close family or the individual's household; or partnerships, companies, trusts or any entities (e.g. charities) in which the individual or their close family of same household has a controlling interest.

31. This declaration is asked for in accordance with FRS9 (Related Party Transactions), as contained within the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in Great Britain 1998.

WHISTLE BLOWING (Protected Disclosure Policy)

32. The whistle blowing policy of the Council is publicised throughout the organisation on the internal Intranet.

33. As a first step, concerns should be raised with the employee's immediate manager or their superior. This depends however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. If this is not practical or appropriate then they can be raised with the Monitoring Officer or the Head of Audit.

34. Where appropriate, the matters raised maybe investigated internally, be referred to the external auditor or form the subject of an independent inquiry.

35. The Monitoring Officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy.

CORPORATE COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION

36. Legal updates, including details of new legislation, are circulated to relevant officers within the organisation. Those officers then circulate legal updates including new legislation to Members when they consider this to be appropriate.

37. All reports have a compulsory heading in which the author has to consider legal implications and if there are likely to be legal implications the author has to seek comments from the Head of Legal. The same procedure follows for any financial implications (the Head of Finance) and human resources (The Head of Organisational Development).

PROTOCOL ON COUNCILLOR/OFFICER RELATIONS

38. The Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations is contained within the Constitution. This sets out what is expected of Officers and what is expected of Members.

39. When the relationship between Members and Officers breaks down, or becomes strained, attempts should be made to resolve matters informally through conciliation by an appropriate senior manager or Members. Officers will have recourse to the Council's Grievance Procedure or to the Council's Monitoring Officer, as appropriate to the circumstances (as set out in the Constitution).

40. In the last calendar year there have been no complaints of this type to the Monitoring Officer

SUPPORT TO COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE, SCRUTINY AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

41. The distribution and publication of committee reports, agendas and decisions is central to good governance. This includes:

- Distributing and publishing all agendas within five clear working days of the meeting taking place and ensuring that all agendas are compliant with the access to information rules and exempt information is marked up accordingly.
- Advertising public meetings at least five clear days before the meeting date.
- Ensuring that papers are available to the public either through the website or from district offices and libraries.
- Publishing minutes as soon as possible after the meeting, in particular Executive Minutes are published within 3 clear days of the meeting.
- Ensuring that petitions are handled in accordance with the Council's constitution,
- Ensuring that meetings are accessible to the public.

42. One of the explicit aims of the Local Government Act 2000 was to streamline the decision making process to allow Council's to focus on service delivery.

43. From 1st March to 1st November 2007 the following meetings were serviced:

Name of Meeting	No. of times met	
	Ordinary	Extraordinary
Council	4	
Executive	7	1
Planning	9	
Faversham & Swale East Area Forum	2	
Sheppey Area Forum	2	2
Sittingbourne & Swale West Area Forum	2	
Rural Forum	2	
Halfway Unparished Area Grant Committee	2	
Sheerness Unparished Area Grant Committee	2	
Sitt., MR & Kemsley Unparished Area Grant Committee	2	
Audit	2	1
Licensing	1	
Licensing Sub-Committee	7	
Hackney Carriages	1	
Co-ordinating Scrutiny	3	2
Community Scrutiny	5	1
Economy Scrutiny	4	
Environment Scrutiny	5	
Swale Joint Transportation Board	3	1
LSP meetings	3	

44. This represents 76 meetings in total. The volume of meetings represents a substantial commitment of both Councillors' and officers' time and resources. It is of great importance that meetings constitute an effective use of time and resources; that they add value to corporate effectiveness and help in meeting the aims and objectives of the Council. Meetings are generally arranged to start at 7pm, as from research this is the preferred time for members. In addition, a timetable of meetings is set each May for the ensuing year, to ensure that members have as much notice as possible.

THE FORWARD PLAN

45. The coordination and maintenance of the Forward Plan is central to meeting the requirements of good governance as it enhances open and transparent decision-making.

46. The Forward Plan sets out the key decisions that the Executive will take, on a rolling four month programme. It is updated and published each month and its use has been extended to include 'non' key decisions also. This assists in forward planning for Executive agendas, and it has proved useful in the helping Management Team to keep a strategic view of the decision making process. In addition, the Scrutiny Panels also use the Forward Plan to identify whether there are any areas that they wish to review, rather than wait to 'call in' a decision.

MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

47. The Monitoring Officer is responsible to the Standards Committee for the provision of training to Councillors within the District.

48. Democratic Services have been developing the training and development opportunities for members, and the Council has signed up the principles of the South East Employers Member Development Charter.

49. A Member Development Working Group has been established, which includes representatives from the parties on the Council, which has proved invaluable in designing a programme geared to meet members' needs.

50. Planning was undertaken for the new intake of Members who joined the Council from May 2007. This included the preparation of a prospective candidates guide, which included information about what being a councillor involves, and how to apply to be a councillor.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS ON THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

51. The Independent Member Philip Long resigned due to work commitments on 28th June 2007. As required by the regulations governing appointment of independent members, we advertised locally for applicants for this position.

52. I am pleased to report that we received a good response and were able to interview four candidates. We conducted the interviews on Tuesday 2nd October and are pleased to recommend Christopher Maclean as the new Independent Member of the Standards Committee. **This recommendation is due to ratified by Full Council on 21st November 2007.**

ATTENDANCE AT STANDARDS BOARD ASSEMBLY

53. I attended the Sixth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees arranged by the Standards Board for England on 15-16th October at the International Convention Centre, Birmingham. The Conference was titled 'down to detail –making local regulation work'. The emphasis was on providing a perspective on how Standards Committees should be approaching the change in their role.

54. Members will recollect that from 1st April 2008 complaints against councillors will be sent to the local authority. It will be for them to decide whether there is a breach of the Code, if there is a breach whether it should be determined locally or whether the alleged breach is so serious that it should be referred to the Standards Board for England for decision.

55. To implement these changes there will need to be regulations under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill and so I anticipate the need for the Standards Committee to meet to respond to the consultation on the regulations.

56. This Committee has always maintained that it was better to have a robust conduct system dealt with at a local level. Whilst the new approach represents a real opportunity to renew confidence in the trust between electors and the elected, many delegates were concerned about the resources needed and the capacity of the Monitoring Officer's team and the Standards Committee to fulfil this increasingly important role.

57. I have always taken a proportionate and considered approach to this issue given the overall levels of cases that have arisen in Swale since the Code of Conduct was introduced. It was interesting to note that the Standards Board has recently conducted a pilot on how the local filter would operate. Key feedback from this pilot was:

- Each complaint will take an average of 20 minutes to process, though this will vary from case to case.
- Standards Committees' confidence and knowledge of the Code of Conduct will increase once they begin to filter cases themselves.
- On average, local authorities have been about twice as likely to refer complaints for investigations as the Standards Board.

Suggested action: Ongoing monitoring required to assess potential impacts.

58. A key recurring message from the Assembly was how important good conduct and high standards of ethical behaviour are to the wider governance agenda. This is picked up in the separate report by the Head of Internal Audit which makes the links. It is also likely that there will be a detailed Key Line of Enquiry included in the new Comprehensive Area Assessment.

59. The key issues for Standards Committees under the new regime are:

- All complaints will go to the Standards Committee in the first instance. A local filter will be applied at this stage and various outcomes are possible
- All Standards Committees should have an independent Chair – Swale Borough Council has always had an independent Chairman.
- Regulations have yet to be published on how to exercise the powers practically including whether the initial referral is conducted in private
- There will be a need to report to the Standards Board on activity and for it to be monitored.
- How to deal with the three distinct roles that the standards committee has:
 1. Exercising the local filter
 2. Reviewing local filter decision
 3. Hearing following investigation

It is suggested that the same members can carry out roles 1 and 2, and also roles 2 and 3 can be carried out by the same members but not 1 and 2

60. This could potentially impact on the numbers of members required. It would appear to mean that we require a minimum of two separate committees to meet these new responsibilities. They would also need to have the minimum 25% representation by independent members. This suggests that each Sub Committee would have a minimum of 4 members. There is also the need to consider whether there are sufficient parish council members to deal with this. **I would like to consider this further and report back so that we achieve a balance of membership without making the Standards Committee too unwieldy and bearing in mind that political balance is not so much of an issue as the Standards Committee is non political. At the same time I would wish to use some of the very useful information for training on how the local filter would apply.**

61. There have been a number of key cases that have informed the approach to the Code and these were highlighted. The most well known was the Livingstone case which was considered in the High Court during October 2006. The High Court applied a much narrower test of when the Code applied in that it ruled that the Code applied when acting in an official capacity. This position is being addressed through the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill. If enacted, the Code will apply to actions in an official capacity and in a private capacity which results in a criminal capacity but only if it involves disrepute, misusing the position of a councillor or intimidation.

62. Another key case is Hudson, which was decided by the Adjudication Panel for England. This case was about bullying of officers by a particular councillor. The case was considered under the old Code and was taken under the 'treating others with respect and bringing the authority into disrepute' provisions. Under the new Code it would have been considered as a bullying case. There was a pattern of intimidating behaviour against

planning officers over a significant period of time with Cllr Hudson calling for various resignations without foundation. There were other accusations of officers withholding information when that was not the case. He also made serious allegations over the conduct of council officers in a court case which were not proven but had they been would have amounted to perjury. The Adjudication Panel took this very seriously and disqualified the member for 18 months.

63. One other case of note was that relating to Cllr Woodrow, again decided by the Adjudication panel for England. It is noteworthy because it involved the chairman of a Development Control Sub-Committee contacting a statutory consultee and 'improperly discussing' an application for development. What is interesting is that the Panel concluded that it was appropriate for a member to have a predisposition in their community advocacy role provided that it was not predetermination. It also stated that there was a 'line in the sand' in that lobbying of statutory consultees cannot take place. In this instance the Panel found that whilst the actions of the Councillor had over stepped the mark it decided not to levy any sanction. In doing so the Panel took account of Councillor Woodrow's many years distinguished public service within the Council, his unblemished record; the fact that he conceded with the benefit of hindsight that he would not again behave in the way that his did; the fact that he is no longer a Development Control Sub-Committee member; all of the circumstances in which the breach occurred and that he acted at all times in the sincere belief that his actions were accorded with the public interest.

64. I also attended a session on practical mediation skills which provided an invaluable insight into how relationships are at the heart of the ethics and standards framework. It is possible that the Standards Board for England or the Standards Committee may direct the use of mediation.

65. Overall, I am pleased to report that the Assembly proved to be stimulating and a very useful refresh of the key issues to be faced.

CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENTS

66. The Monitoring Officer's role encompasses both proactive and reactive elements. The proactive role centres on raising standards, encouraging ethical behaviour, increasing awareness and utilisation of the elements of good governance and ensuring that robust procedures are in place.

67. The reactive role focuses on taking appropriate action to deal with issues and potential problems as they arise. The Monitoring Officer's effectiveness in this role is in turn dependent on effective systems and procedures being in place to identify problems and ensure that Members, Officers and public are aware of appropriate channels to raise concerns.

68. The work programme aims to expand on the work carried out this year and to consolidate on and embed the systems, policies and procedures that are at present in place, as well as making them more explicit. Work to build capacity, skills and good teamwork will also be a priority in the coming year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

69. That the Standards Committee notes this report and the following action points:
- To consider a thorough review of the Constitution and the Scheme of delegation which supports it.
 - Review and monitor arrangements in respect of any matters arising from the audit report.
 - Keep under review arrangements for the Officer Code of Conduct.
 - Consider a report to a future meeting on the membership of the Committee to respond to the local filter.
 - Consider whether it would be appropriate to arrange a wider briefing for parish councils on the changes to the Code of Conduct and the introduction of the local filter.

Mark Radford
Corporate Services Director & Monitoring Officer

Date: 19/10/2007

Ext: 7268