



# East Northamptonshire Council

## Standards Board - 18 November 2009

### Activity Report of the Monitoring Officer

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#### Summary

This report provides a brief update on current Monitoring Officer activity and ethical matters as requested by the Board for each meeting.

#### Attachment(s)

Appendix A - Extract from Thrapston Town Council newsletter

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#### 1 Standards for England

The quarterly return has been completed and submitted. The return did not show any new activity as the outcomes from the most recent 'other action' had not been completed and no new complaints had been received.

#### 2 Parish and Town Council Activity

- 2.1 Since the Board met on 8 July 2009, 23 enquiries have been recorded from Parish and Town Council Clerks and Councillors, District Councillors and the general public, seeking advice on the complaints process or personal and prejudicial interests and Code of Conduct matters.
- 2.2 Two refresher sessions on the Code of Conduct and associated matters have been held at Raunds (July 09) and Rushden (Oct 09) Town Councils. These were attended by a total of 12 Councillors plus the Town Clerks. Councillors unable to attend these sessions will be sent a personal invitation to the February event.
- 2.3 Councillor Prudence Goss wrote a short but illuminating article for the Thrapston Town Council newsletter on the work of the Standards Board (see Appendix A). This may be an idea that other Councils may wish to follow.

#### 3 Press and Publicity

- 3.1 The advice given by the Monitoring Officer and Standards for England with regard to discussions on the Manor Park Leisure Centre and associated Parish Meeting has been the subject of letters and articles in the local press, including a response by Standards for England. It is proposed that an article is written in Nene Valley News to explain what the Code of Conduct seeks to do and the impact of the advice given on this occasion so that the public are more informed.

#### 4 Monitoring Officer Development

- 4.1 The Monitoring Officer has attended the following training:
  - a) 'Misconduct and The Code' (September 2009). This course covered various aspects of implementation of the Code together with other criminal and civil law constraints on Member's conduct. It was noted that in some instances failure to observe appropriate conduct could result in making a Council's decision unlawful as well as leading to sanction on the individual Member. It included consideration of key Standards for England and court cases, and the sanctions applied,

particularly in the areas of 'treating others with respect', bullying and 'bringing the council into disrepute'. The importance of considering each set of circumstances carefully in respect of the Code was stressed.

- b) 'Improving Local Democracy - The CEHER Bill.' This course focused on the new focus on community engagement that is being facilitated by recent and forthcoming legislation. These include:
- a new duty to promote understanding of our democratic arrangements and how the public can take part in those arrangements
  - the power for any District Councillor to refer any matter to the Scrutiny Committee for discussion
  - a probable new duty to discharge the functions of the Council in such a way as to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage
  - the probable requirement to provide an on-line petition facility, with associated process agreed on how these will be responded to.

c) 'The Standards for England Annual Assembly' (October 2009). (See separate report on agenda.) It was noted that the latest revision of the Members Code of Conduct would be issued in time for implementation at Annual Council meetings in May 2010.

## 5. Future Training Events

- 5.1 Local Councillors (District, Town and Parish) are invited to a Code of Conduct session at East Northamptonshire House at 7pm on Monday 8 February. This session is particularly aimed at those who are new to the role and who haven't previously attended any training but all are welcome as experienced Councillors will be able to provide 'real life' cases to be considered.
- 5.2 It is proposed to repeat the induction session held in September for existing Standards Board Members for the new Independent and Parish Council Members before the next Standards Board meeting.
- 5.3 The new training DVD, 'Assessment made clear: Local assessment of complaints', has been received from Standards for England which relates to the Complaints Process. It is proposed to run training session based round the DVD which lasts for 44 minutes, immediately after the next Standards Board meeting in February, subject to no other major business requiring discussion.

<b>Implications:</b>		
<b>Corporate Outcomes or Other Policy/Priority/Strategy</b>		
Good Quality of Life	<input type="checkbox"/>	Good Reputation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Good Value for Money	<input type="checkbox"/>	High Quality Service Delivery <input type="checkbox"/>
Effective Partnership Working	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strong Community Leadership <input type="checkbox"/>
Effective Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge of our Customers and Communities <input type="checkbox"/>
Employees and Members with the Right Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Other:</b> Ethical Framework/Governance Arrangements		<input type="checkbox"/>
Decision(s) would be outside the budget or policy framework and require full Council approval		<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Financial</b>	There are no financial implications at this stage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	There will be financial implications – see paragraph	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is provision within existing budget	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Decisions may give rise to additional expenditure at a later date	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Decisions may have potential for income generation	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Risk Management</b>	An assessment has been carried out and there are no material risks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Material risks exist and these are recorded at Risk Register Reference -	<input type="checkbox"/>

	inherent risk score - residual risk score -				
<b>Staff</b>	There are no additional staffing implications <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
	Additional staff will be required – see paragraph <input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Equalities and Human Rights</b>	There will be no impact on equality (race, age, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation) or human rights implications <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
	There will be an impact on equality (see categories above) or human rights implications – see paragraph <input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Legal</b>	Power: Local Government Act 2000; The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007				
	Other considerations: Standards Committee (Further Provisions) Regulations 2009				
<b>Background Papers:</b>					
<b>Person Originating Report:</b> Sharn Matthews, Monitoring Officer, 01832 742108, smatthews@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk					
<b>Date: 11 November 2009</b>					
<b>CFO</b>		<b>MO</b>		<b>CX</b>	

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 19)

## Know what your Councillors do- Standards Board

In 2008 I was elected as a Town Councillor representative on the East Northants Standards Board, which comprises:

- 4 Elected members of East Northamptonshire Council
  - 4 Independent members drawn from the general public
  - 2 Members of a Town Council in East Northants
  - 2 Members of a Parish Council in East Northants
- The E.N. Monitoring Officer and Deputy are also in attendance. The Chairman and Vice Chairman are elected from the independent members.

The Standards Board's role and function includes:

Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors.

Assisting Councillors to observe the Members Code of Conduct. Dealing with complaints against Councillors (such as perceived breaches of the above code).

Any complaint comes initially to an Assessment Sub Committee of 3 members chaired by an independent member. This Committee has 4 decision options laid down in government guidelines.

Should the complainant or Councillor(s) concerned disagree with the decision a Review Sub Committee can be convened with different members of the Board taking part. The aim is to be fair to, and open with, all parties.

Cllr Prue Goss

## New Member Joins Thrapston Town Council

We are very pleased to welcome Ray Dodds to the Town Council. Ray and his wife who have lived in Liliac Close for the past seven years have actively become involved with TADS and other local groups. Ray is employed by a local firm in a senior management position. His experience will be of great value to the town and we look forward to working together.

Cllr K Fouty (Chairman)

## Town Council Welcome Pack

If you have recently moved into Thrapston, and have not yet received one of our Welcome Packs, please call into the Town Council Office at The Thrapston Centre, 77 High Street (on the corner of Oundle Road) and pick one up.

The Office is open Monday to Friday between 9.00am and 12.30pm and on Saturday morning between 10.00am and midday.

The pack includes leaflets on town history, local organisations and clubs and local businesses. Also included is a street map of Thrapston and Islip.

## Thrapston Youth Projects

The Town Council have several projects in mind for the young people of the Town. The biggest and most exciting is the revamp of the BMX track area in Meadow Lane that has fallen into disrepair.

The interest in the BMX/skate board scene is quite strong in the Town and a safe environment for the young people to enjoy their sport and 'Hang Out' has been requested by quite a number of them.

The Groundwork team who is assisting the Town Council are now looking at drawing up plans for the area and will shortly be wanting input from our local youngsters as a youth ownership and participation of the project will be needed. It is hoped the young people will want to be involved as the whole youth provision in Thrapston takes shape.

The Community Youth Committee, are looking at ways to deliver on the needs and wants of our young people that were identified in the survey taken at the beginning of the year. It is hoped that a dance/hiphop night can be arranged at the Plaza. If you have ideas of events that would be of interest please email us and let us know.

