

Subject: Strengthening links between the Standards Committee and Overview and Scrutiny

Status: For Publication

Report to: The Standards Committee
Audit Scrutiny Committee

Date: 8th March 2007
15th March 2007

Report of: Head of Planning, Legal and Democratic Services

Portfolio

Holder: Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk Management

Key Decision:

No

Forward Plan

General Exception

Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report examines the relationship between the Standards Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny and sets out proposals to ensure there is a strong working relationship between the two.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report are directly linked to the following corporate priority:-
- Equipping members to fulfil their role as leaders in the community (*Community Network*) by ensuring that strong ethical governance arrangements are in place which will increase public confidence in the high ethical standards required and maintained by the Council.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report. However, the report outlines the requirement to further develop links between Standards and Overview and Scrutiny to embed strong ethical governance arrangements throughout the Council.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and Co-opted members. The Committee also monitors the operation of the Code of Conduct and the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements. The Audit Scrutiny Committee considers compliance with its own and other published standards and controls. These include the Council's ethical governance arrangements. This means that the Audit Scrutiny Committee has a direct interest in the work of the Standards Committee.
- 4.2 In order that the Audit Scrutiny Committee can fulfill its reviewing role, it is recommended that this Committee receives regular information from the Standards Committee detailing the nature of its work.
- 4.3 Particularly, the Standards Committee are requested to consider submitting the Minutes of their meetings to the Audit Scrutiny Committee as a regular agenda item to ensure that items relating to the role of the Audit Scrutiny Committee are taken forward.
- 4.4 In addition, the Standards Committee are also asked to consider the option of submitting six monthly reports to the Audit Scrutiny Committee setting out details relating to the Standards Committee's work and the impact upon the ethical agenda for Rossendale.
- 4.5 The Overview and Scrutiny function in its entirety also has a role to play. Not merely to ensure that its own activities are conducted to high ethical standards, but also in developing policies which maintain and develop an ethical environment.
- 4.6 The Standards Committee may find it needs to request Overview and Scrutiny support for aspects of its policy development work. Using its exploratory and evidence gathering ability, Overview and Scrutiny is well placed to promote good ethical conduct within the Council, the community and a wide range of partners. By so doing, it not only ensures that Overview and Scrutiny activity is conducted to high ethical standards, but that promotion of high ethical standards beyond the Council itself becomes a vital part of community leadership.

5. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

- 5.1 No specific comments.

6. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

- 6.1 As detailed in the report.

7. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

- 7.1 No specific comments

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Improved links between the Standards Committee and the Audit Scrutiny Committee will promote and improve the Council's ethical governance arrangements. Increased reporting from Standards Committee to Audit Scrutiny Committee will increase political and public awareness of the role and work of the Standards Committee and therefore increase political and public confidence in the high ethical standards required and maintained by the Council.

9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 Members of the Committee are asked to consider the options detailed in the report and to agree to developing links to Overview and Scrutiny through the approaches outlined in the report.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 10.1 Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk Management

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There are no background papers to this report