

Subject: Standards Media Guidelines

Status: For Publication

Report to: Standards Committee

Date: 21st June 2010

Report of: Communications Manager

Portfolio

Holder: Finance and Resources

Key Decision: No

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of the new Standards Media Guidelines and to recommend their adoption.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:-

- Delivering quality services to our customers
- Promoting the Borough

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- **Council Reputation** - It is important to instil public confidence in the fairness and impartiality of the complaints system whilst providing reassurance about the steps that the Council takes to discourage and stop misconduct taking place. When complaints are made it is important to consider how the reputation of the Council can best be managed.
- **Ensuring fair and unbiased standards hearings** – failure to manage the media proactively could lead to situations where it is difficult to ensure that Councillors rights are respected and that standards investigations are not compromised.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 Following the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 the responsibility for handling complaints about the conduct of Councillors moved from the national to the local level. With responsibility passing to the local level is it important that the Council has effective processes in place to respond to complaints in a fair and robust way.
- 4.2 By putting in place clear media guidelines to proactively manage standards issues through the media we will be able to build public trust, treat those being investigated fairly and enhance the Council's reputation.
- 4.3 Adopting the Standards will help to ensure that media interest in standards issues is proactively managed and that reporting of standards issues is fair, accurate and unbiased. We will also be able to build public trust, treat those being investigated fairly, and enhance the Council's reputation.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 These guidelines represent accepted good practice and are congruent with the procedures in place for reporting, investigating and determining standards complaints.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

- 7.1 These guidelines will assist staff responding to difficult and challenging press enquiries.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Adopting the guidelines represents the most proactive way for the Council to manage its reputation and provides clarity to Members facing standards complaints.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 9.1 That Council is recommended to adopt the Media Guidelines.
- 9.2 That Council is recommended to agree that all future minor amendments to the guidelines to be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources and the Chair of Standards.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 The Governance Working Group, the Monitoring Officer and the Committee and Member Services Manager.

11. COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Community Impact Assessment required No

Is a Community Impact Assessment attached No

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment attached No

Contact Officer	
Name	Nick Molyneux
Position	Communications Manager
Service/Team	People and Policy
Telephone	01706 238604
Email address	nickmolyneux@rossendalebc.gov.uk

No background papers