

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

22 September 2010

REVIEW OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE PLAN 2010 - 2014

Purpose of Report

1. To advise the Committee on progress made against the targets and priorities set in the Standards Committee's Plan since May 2010.

Background

2. At its meeting on 19 May 2010 the Committee approved a plan for its work which included its top priorities for action in 2010. The Committee agreed to review the plan twice a year in September and March.

Main Considerations for the Council

3. A copy of the plan with comments summarising the action taken in respect of the various targets and priorities is attached as an appendix to this report.
4. Key points to note are summarised in the chairman's overview section of the plan as follows:
 - Good progress has been made towards meeting the priorities set out in the Standards Committee's Plan. It has been necessary, however, to review these priorities in the light of the Coalition Government's announcement of its intention to abolish Standards for England. The position will be reviewed further when the Government's proposals for the future of the standards regime become clearer as the Localism Bill progresses from November 2010. In the meantime the Standards Committee must continue to fulfil its statutory responsibilities efficiently and effectively.
 - Town and Parish Councils have been advised that support and training will continue to be available pending any change in the legislation.
 - The Committee recognises the importance of dealing with complaints in a timely and efficient way. To this end the Committee has introduced target times for the assessment, investigation and determination of complaints and is actively monitoring progress of cases against these targets. Local assessment sub-committees have received training and developed experience in assessing complaints as a consequence of which less complaints are being referred for investigation. The proportion of cases referred for investigation this year is now below the national average. The complaints process has been reviewed to see what further steps may be taken to streamline cases within the requirements of the statutory framework.

- The Committee is in the process of reviewing the Council's Constitution in the light of its first year of operation. This is being undertaken through the Constitution Focus Group and will culminate in proposals to Council for approval in November.
- The Standards Committee has confirmed its commitment to supporting the Council in the development of its culture change programme.

5. The plan will be reviewed further when the Government's proposals for standards are known.

Environmental Impact

6. None.

Equalities Impact

7. The plan is consistent with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Financial Implications

8. None arising directly from this report.

Legal Implications

9. Implementation of the plan will enable the Committee to discharge its statutory responsibilities more effectively.

Proposal

10. The Committee is asked to note performance against the plan since its meeting in May 2010.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report: None