

The highly effective standards committee

Benchmark for effective standards committees

We have developed these indicators of a well functioning standards committee as our starter for 10. These are not for discussion or debate but are offered as a starting point for your deliberations.

Processes

- Case handling
 - Cases dealt with in time
 - Complaints about the process
 - Consistent approach to judgements and sanctioning
- Training identified and delivered – range and depth
- Protocols in place and reviewed regularly
- Transparency
 - Publishing interests on website
 - Gifts and hospitality register available via the website
 - Publicity about the Code
 - Who gets the annual report?
 - Information about the standards committee accessible via the website
- Proactivity
 - Have a work programme
 - Training – how much and who to
 - Promoting the work of the standards committee
 - Links to audit committees where they exist
 - Links to other internal stakeholders
 - Joint standards involvement with partnerships
 - Outreach to parishes

- Leadership
 - Monitoring Officer on senior management team
 - Executive member has standards in their portfolio
 - Regular meetings between the chair of the standards committee and the leadership of the council
 - Public awareness of the committee and ethics generally
 - Ethics and standards integrated into the operation of the authority

Impact

- Improved standards of conduct
- Fewer complaints about members
- Source of complaints
 - Fewer member on member complaints
 - Increase in complaints from the public
- Subject of complaints
- Testing the impact of training (own and parish and town council members)
- Trust in the authority is improving – eg measured through Citizens Panels or equivalent
- Level of public awareness of the standards committee

Learning

- How the committee learns and develops itself
 - How the committee keeps abreast of “case law” and effective practice
 - Attendance at conferences and networks
 - Extent of individual and committee networking
 - Undertaking formal reviews of the effectiveness of the committee
 - Performance review of standards committee members