

Item No. 8.	Classification: Open	Date: 10 March 2010	Meeting Name: Standards Committee
Report title:		Standards for England Annual Return	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the standards committee notes the draft annual return in appendix A, and provides any comments to the monitoring officer.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. As reported at the meeting on 1 July 2009 as part of their role in ensuring the effectiveness of local standards arrangements the Standards for England ("SfE") collect information about how local authorities are supporting ethical conduct. The enactment of section 66B of the 2000 Act means in addition to quarterly returns which provides statistics on complaint handling, the annual return is now part of a statutory requirement to provide information to SfE.
3. The purpose of the annual return is to find out what arrangements Southwark has in place to ensure and promote high ethical standards. It looks at the way the authority supports ethical standards as a whole, not just how it handles complaints.
4. The annual return complements the quarterly return. Maintaining an ethical environment not only requires processes and protocols, such as codes of conduct, but also a culture that supports them. Therefore, while the quarterly return for the most part focuses on case handling and the annual return collects information that will allow SfE to understand the culture and wider governance arrangements in authorities.
5. The questions on the form will change each year in line with the development of the framework. This year's return focuses on the following topics:

Communications

The responses to this section will help SfE to collect examples of the different ways that standards committees communicate messages about ethical standards, both within the authority and to the wider public.

Influence

SfE considers that a key factor in creating a strong ethical framework in authorities is clear ethical leadership from leaders and chief executives, setting the tone for the rest of the organisation.

Training and Support

Investigations

Relationships with Parish and Town Councils [not applicable to Southwark]

6. The SfE state that the information collected in the annual returns will be used to drive up performance, champion the work of standards committees, and to ensure that we have an effective overview of local standards frameworks.
7. In particular the SfE will:
 - Collect notable practice examples of standards committee activities which we can then disseminate.
 - Identify national gaps in local standards frameworks.
8. A copy of draft 2010 annual return, to be submitted in April is attached as appendix A.
9. The standards committee may wish to consider if this years annual return identifies any gaps or suggests any improvements in Southwark's current arrangements.

Community Impact Statement

10. Good governance is very important in aiding the decision-making process and helping to boost public confidence in the council.

Legal Implications

11. The legal implications are included in the report.

Resource Implications

12. Any resource implications will be contained within existing budgets.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
The Constitution.	http://www.southwark.gov.uk/YourCouncil/HowTheCouncilWorks/councilconstitution.html 2nd floor, PO Box 64529, London, SE1P 5LX	Lesley John 020-7525-7228
Annual Return Guidance Notes	2nd floor, PO Box 64529, London, SE1P 5LX	Norman Coombe 020-7525-7678
Annual Return Review 2009	http://www.standardsforengland.gov.uk/media/Annual%20Review%202008-09.pdf 2nd floor, PO Box 64529, London, SE1P 5LX	Norman Coombe 020-7525-7678

APPENDICES

No.	Item
Appendix A.	Annual Return 2010

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director, Communities, Law & Governance	
Report Author	Norman Coombe, Principal lawyer	
Version	Final	
Dated	25 February 2010	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director, Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	incorporated
Chief Finance Officer	No	No
Executive Member	N/A	N/A
Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services	25 February 2010	