



## Annual Return form - 2010

**Authority name** Epping Forest District Council  
**Primary contact** Colleen O'Boyle  
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### PART 1: COMMUNICATION

#### Annual Report

#### Does the standards committee produce an annual report?

Yes

#### What does the report contain?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A personal statement by the standards committee chairman           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information about the members of the standards committee                          |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The role of the standards committee                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The standards committee terms of reference  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information about the Code of Conduct                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statistical information about complaints that have been received                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information about the length of time taken dealing with complaints | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A summary of complaints which have led to investigation, sanction or other action |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Details about training/events provided                  | <input type="checkbox"/> The forward work plan of the standards committee   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other  |   |

#### How is the standards committee annual report circulated?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sent to all senior officers                           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sent to all members  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sent to parish/town councils                          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available on the authority intranet  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available as a specific item on the authority website | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available in the standards committee papers published on the authority website |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Included as a full authority meeting agenda item      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Publicised in local press  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distributed to households  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available at authority offices   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not circulated outside of the standards committee                | <input type="checkbox"/> Other   |

**The report is "Available as a specific item on the authority website", please provide the web address.**

[http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local\\_democracy/standards\\_committee.asp](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/standards_committee.asp)

**The report is "Available in the standards committee papers published on the authority website", please provide the web address.**

[http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local\\_democracy/standards\\_committee.asp](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/standards_committee.asp)

#### Publicising Complaints

#### How can the public access information about how to make a complaint against a member?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through a 'compliments and complaints' type section of the council website | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through the standards committee section of the website |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complaints leaflets available from the authority                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Included as part of a council newsletter                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertised through parish councils  | <input type="checkbox"/> Information is not available to the public                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other   |  |

**The information is on the "'compliments and complaints' type section of the**

**council website", please provide the web address.**

[http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local\\_democracy/Councillor\\_Conduct.asp](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/Councillor_Conduct.asp)

**The information is on "standards committee section of the website", please provide the web address.**

[http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local\\_democracy/standards\\_committee.asp](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/standards_committee.asp)

### How can the public access information about the outcome of initial assessment decisions?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Written summary available for public inspection      | <input type="checkbox"/> All initial assessment decisions are publicised in the local press |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicised in the local press only if the subject member agrees | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assessment decisions published on the authority website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Articles published in the authority newsletter                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other  |

### How can the public access information about the outcome of investigations?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hearings are open to the public                      | <input type="checkbox"/> All investigation outcomes are publicised in the local press |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicised in the local press only if the subject member agrees | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published on the authority website                |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decision notices are available for public inspection | <input type="checkbox"/> Articles in the authority newsletter                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other   |   |

**Do you have a mechanism in place for measuring the satisfaction of all those involved in allegations of misconduct? For example the member, complainant and witnesses.**

No

### Communicating the role and work of the standards committee and standards generally

#### What does the authority do to promote the work of the standards committee and standards generally to the rest of the authority (i.e. internally)?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated standards committee pages on intranet                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Standards committee has its own newsletter / bulletin                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standards committee issues briefing notes                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Articles in employee newsletter / bulletin / newspaper                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standards committee independent members observe other authority meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> Standards committee independent members contribute to other authority meetings |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other   |   |

**Please describe the "Other" methods used.**

none of the above

#### How can the public access information about your standards committee?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dedicated standards committee section on the authority website         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Within 'council and democracy' type section of website                        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethical standards issues have been included in the local press / media | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee minutes, agendas, and reports are available to the public |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leaflets and/or posters are placed in public buildings                            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Places articles in the authority newsletter / bulletin / other publication    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee meetings are observed by members of the public     | <input type="checkbox"/> Information is not available to the public   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other   |   |

**Please provide the web address for the standards committee section on the authority website.**

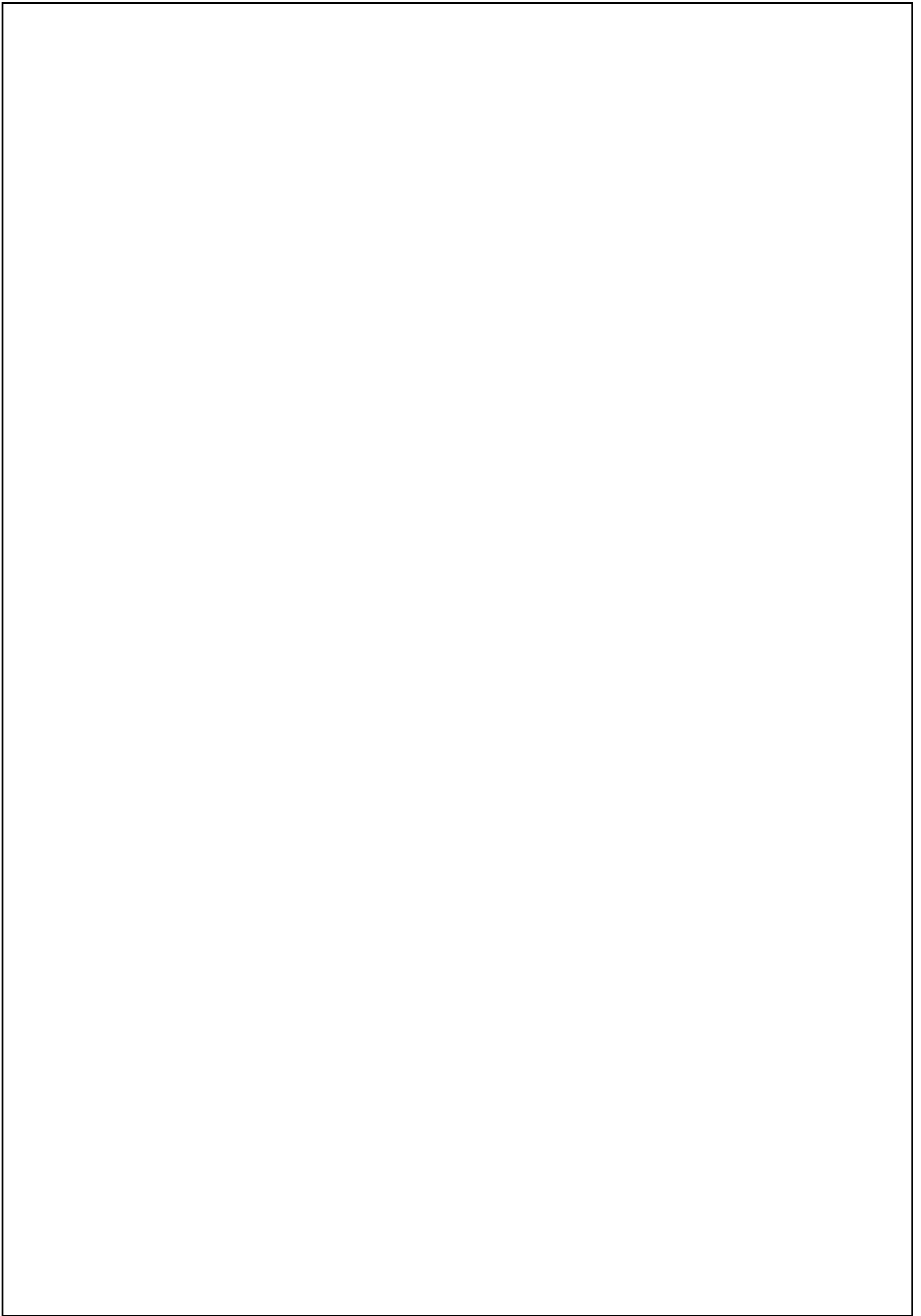
[http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local\\_democracy/standards\\_committee.asp](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/standards_committee.asp)

**Please provide the web address for information within the council and democracy section of your website.**

[http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local\\_democracy/democratic\\_services/default.asp?modgovlink=http%3A%2F%2Frds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk%2FieListMeetings.aspx%3FCId%3D396%26amp%3BYear%3D2010%26amp%3Bku%3Dku](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/democratic_services/default.asp?modgovlink=http%3A%2F%2Frds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk%2FieListMeetings.aspx%3FCId%3D396%26amp%3BYear%3D2010%26amp%3Bku%3Dku)

#### What else does the authority do to promote the work of the standards committee and standards generally to the public and other partners?

The work of the Standards Committee published as part of recruitment exercise



## PART 2: INFLUENCE

### How does the standards committee communicate ethical issues to the senior figures within your authority (for example the Chief Executive and Leader of the Authority, Party Leaders)?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Formal meetings between standards committee members and senior figures specifically set up to discuss standards | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal discussion on particular standards issues  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior figure attendance at standards committee meetings   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Officer is a member of or attends Corporate Management Team (or equivalent) meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Executive or senior member has portfolio responsibility for standards   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chair (or other standards committee member) addresses full authority meeting(s)                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other   |   |

### How do the senior figures in your authority demonstrate strong ethical values?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Through a strongly promoted whistle-blowing policy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> By ensuring there are references to ethics in the authority vision / objectives           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrating appropriate behaviours    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior figure(s) makes personal commitment to standards in statements to public/employees |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Through any other method                           |   |

### Does your authority have a protocol for partnership working that outlines the standards of behaviour expected of all those working in partnership?

No

### What mechanisms does the authority use for dealing with member/officer and/or member/member disputes?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal discussion/mediation          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Officer mediation                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chair of standards committee mediation            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior figure mediation (e.g. Chief Executive) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advice from Human Resources department | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Solicitor / legal adviser consulted            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal hearing                       | <input type="checkbox"/> No mechanisms other than normal complaints process        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other   |  |

## PART 3: TRAINING AND SUPPORT

**Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010, has the authority assessed the training and development needs of authority members in relation to their responsibilities on standards of conduct?**

Yes

**If yes, what needs were identified?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Introduction to the Code of Conduct                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elements of the Code of Conduct |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The role and responsibilities of the standards committee | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance/behaviour    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                                      |

**What training/support was provided during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Introduction to the Code of Conduct                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Elements of the Code of Conduct |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Role and responsibilities of the standards committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance/behaviour    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other                |

**Describe the "Other" training/support provided.**

Assessment of Complaints Process - Other training was awaiting new code

**Who received training/support?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards committee chair   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Independent members   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other standards committee members   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All authority members |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specific authority members with particular needs (e.g. new members, planning committee members) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                            |

**What methods were employed to give training/support?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops) | <input type="checkbox"/> External trainer/speaker                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One on one training   | <input type="checkbox"/> Joint/regional training event                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online learning   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Guidance notes/briefing materials |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standards for England materials                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethical governance toolkit        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other   |   |

**What other training/support has been provided on areas of an authority member's role or activities they may engage in?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairing skills                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Lobbying                                |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Predetermination, Predisposition and bias | <input type="checkbox"/> Blogging and/or the use of social media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electioneering                                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Freedom of Information (FOI) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                                   |

**In general, how well attended was the training provided?**

0-25%

**Please give a brief overview of how standards issues are covered in your induction process for new members of the authority?**

Specific Courses are run on Code of Conduct and standards issues very early in each municipal year, normally in the period between election and the annual council meeting.

## PART 4: INVESTIGATIONS

**Have any investigations been completed during the period 1 April 2009 - 31 March 2010?** Yes

**How many investigations have been completed during this period?**

5

**Have any of the investigations used external investigators?** Yes

**Of the investigations completed during the period, for how many have external investigators been used?**

2

**Overall, what was your principle reason for out-sourcing the investigation(s)?**

Lack of staff resources

**What type of external investigator(s) did you use?**

Employee of another authority

Self-employed investigator

Private law firm

Other

**For the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010, what was the approximate total cost of fees paid to the external investigator(s) for completed cases?**

£4500.00

**Please provide a brief overview of the processes you have in place to ensure the quality of local investigations.**

A specific brief is provided by the Monitoring Officer which outlines the scope of the investigation as defined by the Assessment Subcommittee. This brief specifies the boundary of the investigation, sections of the code thought to have been breached, timescales etc. Any views of the Initial Assessment Subcommittee form part of this brief.

Each investigator is also asked to provide a methodology for completing the investigation in accordance with SB Guidance materials which is specifically agreed by the Monitoring Officer prior to commencement of the investigation.

An ongoing dialogue is maintained with the investigator during the investigation period. This enables the Investigator to raise other matters discovered as part of the investigation and be supported through the process by officers.

Each external consultant is also required to sign a standard contract for each investigation.

## PART 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

**Has your authority provided training for parish councillors during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010?**

Yes

**If yes, what topics did the training cover?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom of Information (FOI)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Confidential information      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planning                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Lobbying                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dual-hatted members                | <input type="checkbox"/> The Code of Conduct generally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal and prejudicial interests | <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying                      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other                   |  |

**What "Other" topics did the training cover?**

Local Assessment of Complaints

**What methods were employed to give training/support?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internal training (presentations/seminars/workshops) | <input type="checkbox"/> External speakers                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One on one training                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Joint/regional event                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guidance notes/briefing materials                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Standards for England's materials               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CALC speakers  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Part of wider parish liaison meeting |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other                                     |  |

**What "Other" methods were used?**

Officers provide a great deal of informal support to Parish/Town Council's generally falling into two areas: pre-complaints 'handling' and advice and advice on code requirements. This is provided on a request basis

**In general, how well attended was the training for parish councillors?**

0-25%

**Has your authority provided training for parish clerks during the period 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010?**

No

**Does your council have a COMPACT (a formal agreement with your county Association of Local Councils about supporting standards for parish and town councils in the area)?**

No

**Describe the relationship between your authority and your County Association of Local Councils in relation to standards. For example, how regularly do you interact with them? Are you involved in delivering joint training?**

There has been good liaison this year with the Essex Association of Local Council's who have provided support for individual parishes including assisting in providing training to a particular parish council subject to a number of member on member complaints and in helping this council find a mentor for the parish clerk from another local Town Council.

**Standards for England and Teesside University are currently researching the role of the Parish Liaison Officer. Teesside University have created a brief questionnaire to assess the organisational background, functions and skills needed to carry out the Parish Liaison role. Does your authority have a Parish Liaison Officer?**

No

**What steps have you taken when dealing with parishes which have had problems with standards issues? For example, what preventative or capacity building work have you done with parishes?**

As part of ongoing liaison we have:

- (i) raised Standards Issues in Parishes at Local Council Liaison meetings this year.
- (ii) deal with a considerable amount of problems around standards issues - this includes responding to a direction from SFE this year
- (iii) attempted to liaise with Parish/Town members at an early stage in disputes to try and resolve standards and conflict issues before they reach the stage of formal complaints

**Which of the following areas would you like Standards for England to produce additional guidance on to support your work with parishes?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lobbying                          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Predetermination and bias |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and interests | <input type="checkbox"/> Dual-hatted members                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other                  |   |

**Please describe what "Other" areas you would like covered.**

We would like more advice on where the line is drawn in member/member complaints

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**End of form**