

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 25th MARCH 2010

STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND – MONITORING OFFICERS ANNUAL REPORT

REPORT OF HEAD OF GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING OFFICER

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide the committee with details of the information to be included in the annual return which the Monitoring Officer must provide to Standards for England.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Committee consider the annual return information provided by Standards for England and provide comments to the Monitoring Officer to assist when the return is completed

3. SUMMARY

Standards for England make an annual request for information at around this time of year. On this occasion they have provided a preview of the information that they will be seeking. The details are attached for the Committee to consider.

4. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Standards Committee – 18 June 2009

5. INFORMATION

5.1 Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended) includes provision for Standards for England to request information from local authorities. One part of this is the annual return which all Monitoring Officers are asked to complete in the form of an online questionnaire. This year Standards for England have provided advance notice of the information that they will request. When sending the information Standards for England stated as follows

“In our December bulletin we mentioned that we would be previewing the questions for our Annual Return 2010 in advance of the end of the financial year. This is to give monitoring officers more time to prepare their responses and to consult with their standards committees, before we request that completed returns are submitted online at the year end.

The questions are attached to this email, along with some brief guidance notes that offer further explanation about what is being asked and why.

The focus of last year’s annual return was to tease out a narrative of the activities that standards committee had undertaken in the first year of the new local framework. Many questions were left open, so that you had the freedom to provide us with as much information as you felt necessary.

This year our approach is slightly different. Using information from last year’s responses, we have designed a “tick box” questionnaire. This means that there are less open questions which should make the return quicker and easier to complete. However, you have not lost the opportunity to provide us with a narrative. Most of the tick-box lists have an option for “other”, which, when ticked, opens up a free text box for you to type in. The rationale behind this is so that you need only type in a response when the activity you are describing is not included in our list. We are hopeful that this will make it easier for us to identify notable practice to share with the rest of the standards community.

The attached preview of the questions shows the Annual Return in its entirety. Depending on the circumstances of your authority, you may not need to answer all of the questions. The online version will only display the ones that are relevant to your authority.

We will be in touch soon with further information about when the submission period will be. It is likely to be a 10 working day window, much like the quarterly return, either at the end of March or beginning of April.

We will also provide you with a more detailed user guide to help you complete the return online.”

The Committee are asked to consider the documents that are attached to this report and provide comments to the Monitoring Officer which will assist in completing the return of information to Standards For England.

5.2 Equality and Diversity

No implications

5.3 Environmental Impact

None

5.4 Legal Comments

The legal comment is contained within the main body of this report.

5.5 Links with Corporate Priorities

Ensuring that the return is completed and all areas highlighted by Standards For England are addressed will assist the Council in ensuring that it is operating in an effective and efficient manner.

5.6 Opportunities and Risks

The potential opportunities and risks associated with the issues raised in the report will be addressed. The opportunities identified will be maximised and the potential risks will be dealt with appropriately.

5.7 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The process of completing the annual return will be met from within existing resources.

5.8 Ward Implications

District wide implications

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Annual Report of the Standards Committee

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