

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

1.	Meeting:	Standards Committee
2.	Date:	16 th July 2015
3.	Title:	Review of the Standards Committee
4.	Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary:

- 5.1 This report outlines suggestions relating to the review of the Standards Committee's role and Terms of Reference in the light of recent reports of Alexis Jay and Louise Casey and the Government intervention in the Council.
- 5.2 The arrival of the Commissioners has meant that the Standards regime needs to be examined to ensure that it contributes to the improvement of the Council. Commissioners wish to introduce improvements to ensure healthy democratic leadership and accountability. A fresher more prominent standards committee will contribute to the development of this healthier culture.
- 5.3 Various options for improvement are discussed and members will of course have their own suggestions to make. It is suggested that a working group be established to consider options in depth and report back to the Standards Committee in September 2015.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That the Committee approves:-
- That a working group be established to advise the Standards Committee on any possible improvements that could be made to the Standards Committee.
 - That members put forward any ideas they have for re-vitalising the Committee
 - That members agree the membership of the working group.

7. Proposals and details

- 7.1 The terms of reference of the Standards Committee have not been considered since the introduction of the Localism Act 2011. Since then there has been considerable change within the Council, including the publication of the Jay and Casey reports and the intervention in the Council by the Secretary of State.

7.2 It is appropriate therefore that the Standards Committee should re-examine its focus and consider how it can best help take the Authority forward. Several suggestions for improvement have been made and these include;

a) Changing the name and membership of the Committee.

This may include considering whether to have an independent Chair or Vice Chair, and perhaps updating the name of the Committee to reflect the priorities of the Council, e.g. The Standards and Ethics Committee.

b) Extending or changing the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

This may include monitoring other Council procedures, for example reports from the Ombudsman or looking at legal challenges to the Council and advising on how procedures could be improved

c) Formalising and publicising the work of the Committee

This could be achieved by agreeing on a work plan for the Committee at a point in the year, presumably after the Committee have decided what they wish to concentrate on and producing an annual report demonstrating the challenges and achievements of the Committee in the past year.

The report could include figures on work undertaken and comparisons on the previous years' figures.

d) Looking at the Code of Conduct.

The Council's Code of Conduct is based upon the national code although it does have some differences based on local circumstances. This could be re-examined and adapted to reflect the Council's priorities.

e) Checking the 'ethical health' of the Council.

Some time ago ethical audits were suggested for Councils as part of the useful to look at areas within the Council and form a view as to the 'ethical health' of the council.

f) Other issues

Other issues that could be looked at include whether the Committee should have a mission statement or vision and if so what form that would take and whether the Officer Code of Conduct should be updated

g) The Working Group

It is suggested that a working group is formed to carry out this discreet piece of work and report back to the Standards Committee in September.

It is suggested the membership should include the Chair , the Vice Chair, an Independent member, a parish Councillor ,a member of the opposition and an Independent Person.

8. Finance

8.1 There would no financial consequences of establishing this working group.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

9.1 There is a risk that the standards and ethical heath of the Council could suffer if the procedures in place are not reviewed and if appropriate updated, regularly.

10. Policy and performance Agenda Implications

10.1 The Council has a duty to promote ethical standards.

10.2 Ethical Framework and Standards

11. Background Papers and Consultation

11.1 Ethical Governance Audit – IDEA