

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To set out future proposals by Standards for England as regards the Standards Framework and risk based engagement.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Standards for England has been reviewing the Standards Framework based on opinions from stakeholders and research findings from quarterly returns and approaches made to it.
- 2.2 The purpose of the review was to consider the proportionality and effectiveness of the local standards framework
- 2.3 The whole report is appended. However the recommendations arising out of the report are summarised in Appendix 1. The recommendations go to the Department of Communities and Local Government for further consideration. Some of the proposed changes will require legislative changes but others can be introduced by changes to guidance.
- 2.4 The proposals cover the following areas: -
- Simplifying and streamlining the investigative process
 - Deterring trivial complaints
 - Closing down an investigation
 - Enhancing members' 'right to know'
 - Publishing decision records
 - The cost of the local framework
 - The local framework and high standards
 - The members' Code of Conduct
 - The role of the national regulator
- 2.5 Standards for England are also proposing to introduce Relationship Managers based on Audit Commission areas. It is likely that this council would be included in the area covering the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber.
- 2.6 The remit of such managers would be to liaise with local authorities to offer a "helping hand". The regularity of such engagement would depend on the risk category - low, medium, high - in which the local authority was placed. A number of criteria would be used to make such an assessment. These would include - authorities scoring 1 the Use of Resources inspection carried out by the Audit Commission or being the subject of a public

interest report (there would be close ties developed between the Audit Commission and Standards for England as regulators in this area), authorities without complaints, authorities still operating the committee system, authorities where standards committees were not compliant or returns made on time, core cities, authorities with a significant number of town/parish councils, authorities where assessments/investigations were taking an unduly long time, authorities which were subject to successful appeals.

2.7 It is intended to consult on these criteria in the Spring with authorities receiving an indicative rating at that time.

2.8 Standards for England does have statutory powers to remove these functions as a last resort and recharge authorities.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 The report is presented for information.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

4.1 The proposals are aimed at streamlining the system and so should have no financial, staffing and IT resources unless the existing staff resources are unable to cope with speedier turn round targets.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

5.1 None

6. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

6.1 National consultations have been held on the framework and the outcomes have been taken into account in the recommendations.

6.2 Local consultations are to be held on the risk factors

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 To note the developments

SERVICE DIRECTOR LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC

Pittwood House
Ashby Road
SCUNTHORPE
DN16 1AB
Author: Mike Wood
17 March 2010

Background Papers - Nil