

**Body:** STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**Date:** TUESDAY 13 APRIL 2010

**Subject:** NOTABLE PRACTICE

**Report Of:** LAWYER TO THE COUNCIL AND MONITORING OFFICER

**Ward(s)** All

**Purpose** To update the Committee on the latest Standards for England bulletin and to ask them to note the research on notable practice.

**Recommendation:** That the information contained in this report be noted.

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## **1.0 Background**

1.1 The latest Standards for England bulletin is appended to this report (appendix 1). Bulletin 47 was released in February 2010. The Standards Committee is invited to consider the bulletin and in particular the attention of the Committee is drawn to the section on the new notable practice research highlighting examples and case studies, from which Standards Committees can take a lead.

## **2.0 Notable Practice**

2.1 Research into 'notable practice', was carried out jointly by Hull University and the University of Teesside and was finalised in October 2009. It is called 'notable practice' to highlight the fact that the tips for success are examples of where particular approaches have worked in certain authorities, rather than 'set-in-stone' rules about what should be done. The report is attached as appendix 2 and has been circulated to members of the Committee only.

2.2 The report emphasises that the research is designed to be informative rather than prescriptive. By notable it means innovative and positive. One of the key themes is the importance of leadership, particularly in terms of political support within the authority. The role of the independent members is also key.

2.3 The Standards for England website has a page on notable practice and this report sets out some examples cited below. They also come from the Standards and Ethics category of the LGC Awards. The committee is asked to note the variety of examples and to consider whether the adoption of any of

these ideas might be worth further discussion by EBC's Standards Committee.

### **3.0 Examples of notable practice**

- 3.1 Newcastle City Council is recognised as a notable practice case study for its work to embed standards. Among other things, Newcastle uses its internal staff bulletin to draw staff's attention to the code of conduct and the work of its Standards Committee (SC). It carries out ethical governance audits with members and officers that ask whether people are aware of the SC, whether they are aware of what the SC is there for and whether they are aware of the independent members. The answers they received in 2009 were improved from 2004. They also seek monthly returns for their gifts and hospitality register.
- 3.2 Buckinghamshire County Council hold annual officer quizzes that include questions on standards.
- 3.3 Leeds City Council has an internal newsletter 'Governance Matters' which promotes ethical and corporate governance issues and details the work of the SC.
- 3.4 North Tyneside Council were commended for their proactive external communications strategy. The MO worked closely with the communications team to ensure regular coverage of the SC work in the local press and in the Councils residents' magazine.

### **4.0 Recommendation / Conclusion**

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report. The examples given above are not recommendations but are designed to promote discussion of the different ways in which this SC might embed and promote standards. The committee may also wish to discuss the best ways of informing officers and members and the wider public about its work.

### **5.0 Consultation / Resource implications**

- 5.1 Not relevant at this stage.

**ALICE ROWLAND  
LAWYER TO THE COUNCIL AND MONITORING OFFICER**

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#### **Background Papers:**

None.