

To: Standards Committee

Date: 4th December 2009

Item No: 10

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

Title of Report: ASSESSMENT PANELS – ANALYSIS

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To analyse the Assessment Panels that have been held since Summer 2008, the findings of those Assessment Panels, and to draw conclusions

Report Approved by:

Finance: N/A

Legal: Jeremy Thomas

Policy Framework: N/A

Recommendation(s): To note the analysis and that the learning points are being considered further in the Committee Effectiveness and Profile report elsewhere on this agenda.

1. The Committee asked at its October meeting (minute 22) for an analysis to be presented to this meeting of Code breach allegations and assessment panel findings since Summer 2008. The information in the Appendix to this report, in slightly different form, was presented to the Committee's June meeting. It has been updated in the light of subsequent panel meetings, and formatted differently for this meeting. An analysis and conclusions follow in the report.
2. A simple analysis of the Code breach allegations and Panel meetings is as follows:-
 - Number of assessment panels – 10
 - Number of review panels – 1
 - Number of "no action" findings – 7
 - Number of "alternative action" decisions – 2
 - Number of investigation decisions – 1

- Nature of complaints :-
 - Failure to treat others with respect – 7
 - Bringing office or authority in disrepute – 5
 - Interests declaration breach – 2
- Origin of complaints:-
 - Action / behaviour at area committee – 4
 - Action / behaviour at other council meeting – 1
 - Action / behaviour by way of published remarks – 2
 - Action / behaviour at private meeting – 2
 - Other - 1
- Complainants:-
 - Members of the public – on 9 occasions
 - Member of Council – on 1 occasion.
- Members complained about :-
 - Five members – 1 occasion each
 - One member – on 2 occasions
 - One member – on three occasions
- Number of independent members of the Standards Committee – 5
- Number of independent members who have been a member of a Assessment Panel – 3
 - Ballinger – 7 meetings (maximum 10)
 - Gardiner – 10 meetings (maximum 10)
 - Gwinnett – 3 meetings (maximum 10)
- Number of independent members who have been a member of a review panel - 2
 - Dean – 1 meeting (maximum 1)
 - Lay – 1 meeting (maximum 1)
- Number of Councillors on the Standards Committee – 5
- Number of Councillors who have been a member of an assessment panel - 4
 - Brundin – 6 (maximum 10)
 - Craft – 2 (maximum 10)
 - Dhall – 0 (maximum 10)
 - Sanders – 1 (maximum 10)

- Smith – 1 (maximum 10)
- Number of Councillors who have been a member of a review panel –
 - Brundin – 1 (maximum 1)

3. What can we learn from this analysis? Two principal things:-

- (a) That the “burden” of assessment panel work is not spread evenly;
- (b) That when the next Code of Conduct training is undertaken, officers ought specifically to address in that training matters of failure to treat others with the respect; bringing the office (of councillor) or the authority into disrepute; and the need for members to be aware of interests in items on agenda and to declare them at meetings, and what this then means in terms of their ability to deal with matters at meetings. Officers will prepare training along these lines and research Standards cases that illustrate the point.

4. The learning points are picked up in the report on Committee Effectiveness and Profile, elsewhere on the agenda for this Standards Committee meeting.

Name and contact details of author:-

William Reed
Democratic Services Manager
Town Hall Oxford OX1 4YS
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: wreed@oxford.gov.uk

Comment [x1]: Name, telephone number and email

Background papers : None