



BUSINESS PLAN

2014 / 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

This Annual Business Plan expands upon the information contained in our Strategic Plan 2012/16 in which we set out our plans covering the four year period. It provides detail in relation to the third year of the Strategic Plan and sets out how we aim to achieve our strategic objectives.

2. PURPOSE

The Standards Commission is an independent body whose purpose is to encourage high ethical standards in public life through the promotion and enforcement of Codes of Conduct for Councillors and those appointed to the Boards of Devolved Public Bodies.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2012/13 – 2015/16

The Standards Commission's strategic objectives for the four-year period are as follows:

1. To promote the Ethical Standards Framework and so encourage recognition of and respect for the Codes of Conduct.
2. To assist councils and public bodies to achieve the highest ethical standards of conduct and ensure the guidance and support provided by the Standards Commission responds to their needs.
3. To enforce the Codes of Conduct impartially, timeously and in accordance with legislation.
4. To operate in accordance with the principles of good governance, best value, joint working and working in partnership and to secure continuous improvement.

4. BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

We set out below our business objectives for the year 2014/15. Each objective is shown under the main strategic objective to which it contributes. However, a number of our business objectives will contribute to more than one of our strategic objectives.

THE STANDARDS COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND

1. To promote the Ethical Standards Framework and so encourage recognition of and respect for the Codes of Conduct.

Objective		Actions	Activities 2014/15	Measurement / Target
1.1	Regular dialogue with stakeholders to monitor understanding of and respect for the Codes amongst the public, councillors and members of public bodies	Regular dialogue with stakeholders to monitor understanding of and respect for the Codes amongst the public, councillors and members of public bodies	a) Events arranged for MO and SO's	Number of meetings conducted with each group for specified need / purpose. <i>MO meeting Q4</i> <i>SO meeting Q4</i>
			b) Local media coverage of Ethical Standards Framework. <i>(part of Comms strategy)</i>	Amount of SCS driven coverage <i>One piece per Hearing (ad hoc – demand driven)</i>
1.2	Consistent decision making by the Standards Commission in relation to breach cases and hearings	Consistent decision making by the Standards Commission in relation to breach cases and hearings	c) Briefing notes to be used more extensively to publish outcomes of Hearings / learning points	Number of professional briefings prepared for general dissemination, demonstrating decision making by Standards Commission <i>One each in Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4</i>
1.3	Engagement with and provision of advice to Scottish Ministers and the Parliament	Engagement with and provision of advice to Scottish Ministers and the Parliament	d) Review nature and scope of briefings to MSP and Ministers.	Opportunities to liaise and brief Ministers / Scottish Government <i>Session with SPCB in Q1</i> <i>Annual report in Q2</i>
1.4	Promotion of the role and content of the Codes in Scottish public life	Promotion of the role and content of the Codes in Scottish public life.	e) Completion of roadshow programme with local authorities on request.	Number of events provided to relevant bodies / organisations to attend <i>(ad hoc – demand driven)</i>

			f) Better educational material available on the website. <i>(part of Comms strategy)</i>	Improved variety of documents created and uploaded as listed in the Communications Strategy including <i>Professional Briefings, Hearings Outcomes and new Guidance on Codes of Conduct.</i>
			g) Effective working relationship with CES	Joint approach MOU in place with CES. <i>Initial Meeting in Q1</i> <i>Subsequent meetings Q2, Q3, Q4</i>
			h) Generation of new Guidance Notes on Codes of Conduct.	New guidance notes issued for both Codes of Conduct <i>Model Code Guidance issued for consultation during Q2</i> <i>Refreshed Councillor Code Guidance issued for consultation during Q3.</i>

2. To assist councils and public bodies to achieve the highest ethical standards of conduct and ensure the guidance and support provided by the Standards Commission responds to their needs.

Objective		Actions	Activities 2014/15	Measurement / Target
2.1	Review complaints referred by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards ('CES') and information obtained from other sources to identify issues for guidance and advice to councils or public bodies	Identify issues for guidance and advice to councils or public bodies	i) Regular updating of case reports analysis to identify trends	Assessment of effectiveness of actions undertaken based upon analysis. <i>Reporting in Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4</i>
2.2	Giving support to the development of education programmes to help councils and public bodies provide training for their councillors and members	Help councils and public bodies provide training for their councillors and members	Complete original plan of roadshows (see entry under objective 1)	<i>See above.</i>
2.3	Provision of guidance on the interpretation of the Codes to the staff and members of councils and public bodies	Timely provision of guidance on the interpretation of the Codes	j) Rolling update of guidance query requests for distribution to Commission Members and on the website to aid understanding.	Numbers of requests for guidance on the interpretation of the Codes (<i>ad hoc – demand driven</i>)
2.4	Publication of Standards Commission findings in any breach hearings for the information of relevant organisations i.e. all councils or public bodies	Timely publication of the Standards Commission findings in any breach hearings	k) Refreshed website content with case studies / professional briefings (<i>part of Comms strategy</i>).	Agreed content which is uploaded and launched to stakeholders. <i>As agreed in Communications Strategy</i>
2.5	Periodic consultation on the Standards Commission's Guidance document	Periodic consultation on the Standards Commission's Guidance document	Events arranged for MO and SO's (see entry under objective 1)	<i>See above.</i>
			l) Consultation on both sets of guidance following March 2014 workshops	<i>Model Code Guidance issued for consultation during Q2</i> <i>Refreshed Councillor Code Guidance issued for consultation during Q3.</i>

2.6	Liaison with relevant organisations to identify the needs of councils and public bodies to help focus the advice and support provided by the Standards Commission	Consideration and application of the learning from surveys referred to in strategic objective 1	Refreshed website content with professional briefings	<i>See above.</i>
			Events arranged for MO and SO's (see entry under objective 1)	<i>See above.</i>
2.7	The analysis of trends in complaints to the CES and an account of any guidance or advice issued	Identify the needs of councils and public bodies to help focus the guidance and support provided by the Standards Commission.	m) New communications strategy to be prepared.	<i>Strategy being brought to Commission meeting April 2014</i>
			Events arranged for MO and SO's (see entry under objective 1)	<i>See above.</i>

3. To enforce the Codes of Conduct impartially, timeously and in accordance with legislation.

Objective	Actions	Activities	Measurement / Target	
3.1	The Standards Commission will act in accordance with the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Scottish Parliamentary Commissions and Commissioners etc. Act 2010	The Standards Commission will act in accordance with the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Scottish Parliamentary Commissions and Commissioners etc. Act 2010	n) Review of operational processes to ensure that timescales are adhered too.	<i>Proportion of cases heard within 12 weeks of decision to hold a hearing</i>
3.2	The Standards Commission will undertake its statutory adjudication role, in relation to alleged breaches of the Codes of Conduct, wholly independently of the CES	The Standards Commission will undertake its statutory adjudication role, in relation to alleged breaches of the Codes of Conduct, wholly independently of the CES	o) Effective working relationship with CES	Development of MOU with CES <i>Timescale–Q2</i>
3.3	If deemed necessary, the Standards Commission will direct the CES to carry out further investigations in potential breach of code cases	If deemed necessary, the Standards Commission will direct the CES to carry out further investigations in potential breach of code cases	p) Effective working relationship with CES (see entry under objective 1)	<i>See above.</i>
3.4	The Standards Commission will determine whether or not to hold a hearing where a potential breach has been reported by the CES	The Standards Commission will determine whether or not to hold a hearing where a potential breach has been reported by the CES	q) Effective working relationship with CES (see entry under objective 1)	<i>See above.</i>
3.5	In the event of a finding of a breach of the relevant Code, the Hearing Panel will determine the sanction to be applied	In the event of a finding of a breach of the relevant Code, the Hearing Panel will determine the sanction to be applied.	r) Review of sanctions imposed.	Levels of sanctions applied for each Hearing <i>(ad hoc – demand driven reviewed at each Hearing)</i>

4. To operate in accordance with the principles of good governance, best value, joint working and working in partnership and to secure continuous improvement.

Objectives		Actions	Activities	Measurement / Target
4.1	Collective leadership by the Standards Commission in the promotion of ethical standards in Scotland	Collective leadership by the Standards Commission in the promotion of ethical standards in Scotland	s) Work with CES to identify improved working practices within the complaints process and information requirements	Improved working practices between the 2 organisations Development of MOU with CES <i>Timescale Q2</i>
			t) Ongoing professional and personal development of Commission Members and employees	Programme of development achieved for each Commission Member and employee (reported to HR Committee) <i>End of Q2</i>
4.2	Commitment to the Nine Principles of Public Life in Scotland (duty, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability and stewardship, openness, honesty, leadership and respect)	Commitment to the Nine Principles of Public Life in Scotland	u) Development of induction pack for new Commission Members	<i>New pack in place for December 2014</i>
			v) Annual assessment of contribution to Public Life principles	Completion of Commission Members Annual Appraisals and completion of self-assessment. <i>Completed by end of Q1</i>
4.3	Adoption of good practice and governance in the oversight of the Standards Commission's finances and other resources(BV)	The adoption of good practice and governance in the oversight of the Standards Commission's finances and other resources	w) Annual accounts (2013/14)	<i>Unqualified accounts laid before Parliament by 31 August 2015</i>
			x) Annual report (2013/14)	<i>Agreed annual report laid before Parliament by 30 September 2015</i>

			y) Implementation of action points arising from audits	<i>Programme of audits and associated improvement actions completed by end of Q4</i>
4.4	Identification and taking forward of opportunities to work jointly or in partnership with other public bodies in order to ensure efficient delivery of the Standards Commissions' role (BV)	The identification and taking forward of opportunities to work jointly or in partnership with other public bodies in order to ensure efficient delivery of the Standards Commission's role	z) Establish Internal Audit MOU in place	MOU in place with SPCB Internal Audit Q1
			aa) Continuation of current shared services arrangements with SPCB	Framework agreement in place with SPCB Q2 <i>(Will also be open to approaches to working with others should opportunities arise)</i>
4.5	The annual appraisal of Standards Commission's Members	Commitment to the Equality Duty principles	bb) Annual assessment of contribution to equalities principles	Completion of Commission Members Annual Appraisals and completion of self-assessment. <i>Timescale– Q1/Q2</i>