



BUSINESS PLAN

2015 / 2016

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 2015/16. 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.

Strategic Objective 1: 'PROMOTION'

To promote the Ethical Standards Framework and so encourage recognition of and respect for the Codes of Conduct by the public and other stakeholders

Actions (Taken From Strategic Plan)	Activities 2015/16	Measurement / Target	Progress Update
1. Regular dialogue with stakeholders to monitor understanding of and respect for the Codes amongst the public, councillors and members of public bodies	a) Annual events arranged for MO's and SO's	Annual meetings conducted with each group <i>MO meeting Q4</i> <i>SO meeting Q2</i>	
	b) Development of key message matrix	Key message matrix in place so responses to media coverage and enquiries can be issued same or next working day <i>Q1</i> Amount of SCS driven media coverage <i>One press release per Hearing</i>	
	c) Redesign of website navigation, format and content	New format finalised and implemented <i>Q1</i> Feedback sought and analysed on redesigned website, including user statistics <i>Q3</i>	
	d) Hold meetings with CoSLA, SOLAR & SOLACE	Annual meetings conducted with each group <i>By end of Q4</i>	
2. Consistent decision making by the Standards Commission in relation to breach cases and hearings	e) Quarterly professional briefings to publish outcomes of Hearings / learning points	Number of professional briefings prepared for general dissemination, demonstrating decision making by SCS <i>One each in Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4</i>	

Strategic Objective 1: 'PROMOTION'

To promote the Ethical Standards Framework and so encourage recognition of and respect for the Codes of Conduct by the public and other stakeholders

Actions (Taken From Strategic Plan)	Activities 2015/16	Measurement / Target	Progress Update
	f) Annual review of decisions to hold hearings and sanctions made	Internal workshop after SCS meeting towards end Q4 <i>Q4</i>	
	g) Internal Audit review of internal processes for arranging and managing Hearings (including how SCS corresponds with parties) and how the Hearings are run (including managing time and costs)	Outcome of Internal Audit Reports. Work to be split over two internal audits. <i>Q2</i> <i>Q4</i>	
3. Engagement with and provision of advice to Scottish Ministers and the Parliament	h) Annual report laid	Must be laid before 31 Oct 2015. SCS plan to lay annual report and annual accounts by 31 August 2015 <i>Q2</i>	
	i) Provide a response to any queries from Ministers, MSP's and Parliament within three working days	Responses provided within timescale <i>Ad hoc – demand driven</i> Report on enquiries received, timescales for responding and trends <i>Report in Q4</i> <i>Convener meets annually with SPCB to discuss the work of Commission</i>	

Strategic Objective 1: 'PROMOTION'

To promote the Ethical Standards Framework and so encourage recognition of and respect for the Codes of Conduct by the public and other stakeholders

Actions (Taken From Strategic Plan)	Activities 2015/16	Measurement / Target	Progress Update
	j) Review efficacy of governing legislation	Produce analysis of provisions that cause difficulty and identify any amendments the SCS may wish to seek Q3	
4. Promotion of the role and content of the Codes in Scottish public life	k) Completion of roadshow events with local authorities or public bodies on request	Number of events provided to relevant bodies / organisations to attend <i>Ad hoc – demand driven</i>	
	l) Generation of new Guidance on Councillors' Codes of Conduct	New guidance issued for Councillors' Code of Conduct Q2 Obtain feedback on impact & effectiveness at MO event in Q4	

Strategic Objective 2: 'ASSISTANCE'

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

Actions	Activities	Measurement / Target	Progress Update
5. Identify issues for guidance and advice to councils or public bodies	m) Regular analysis of cases and enquiries to identify trends	<p>Assessment of effectiveness of actions undertaken based upon analysis</p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>Include guidance on any issues identified in professional briefings and raise at events with MO's and SO's</p> <p><i>Professional briefings Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4; MO meeting Q4</i> <i>SO meeting Q2</i></p> <p>Quarterly meetings with CES to identify trends</p> <p><i>Meetings with CES in Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4</i></p>	
6. Help councils and public bodies provide training for their councillors and members	n) Publication of generic training material on SCS website	<p>Meet requests for roadshows / local events</p> <p><i>Ad hoc – demand driven</i></p> <p>Provide educational and training material on SCS website</p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p>	
7. Timely provision of guidance on the interpretation of the Codes	o) Rolling update of guidance query requests for distribution to SCS Members and published on the website	<p>Respond to guidance queries within 20 working days of receipt of enquiry</p> <p><i>Ad hoc – demand driven</i></p> <p>Numbers of requests for guidance on the</p>	

Strategic Objective 2: 'ASSISTANCE'

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

Actions	Activities	Measurement / Target	Progress Update
		interpretation of the Codes Report on enquiries received, timescales for responding and trends <i>Report in Q4</i>	
8. Timely publication of the Standards Commission findings in any breach hearings	p) Decisions published on website in accordance with timescales outlined in Hearing Rules q) Decision redacted in accordance with SCS policy.	Decisions published within 20 days of the conclusion of any Hearing <i>Ongoing after each Hearing</i>	
9. Periodic consultation on the Standards Commission's Guidance document	Events arranged for MO's and SO's (see activities under objective 1)	See above.	
	r) Survey of all parties and witnesses on the Hearings process	Survey to include questions about quality of pre-Hearing documentation and correspondence, how they found the Hearing itself and the SCS's overall service <i>Q4</i> Review feedback to identify and implement and improvements <i>Q4</i>	

Strategic Objective 2: 'ASSISTANCE'

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

Actions	Activities	Measurement / Target	Progress Update
10. Consideration and application of the learning from surveys referred to in strategic objective 1	s) Create action plan of follow up activities following events for MO's and SO's	Following annual meetings conducted with each group. <i>MO meeting Q4</i> <i>SO meeting Q2</i>	
11. Identify the needs of councils and public bodies to help focus the guidance and support provided by the Standards Commission	t) Identify any specific needs that arise from the creation of the new College Boards and Health & Social Care Joint Integration Boards and issue guidance as appropriate	Assessment of impact and which organisations fall within remit. <i>Q1</i> Create and implement action plan <i>Q3</i> Provide training support if requested <i>Ad hoc – demand driven</i>	

Strategic Objective 3: 'ENFORCEMENT'

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

Actions	Activities	Measurement / Target	Progress Update
<p>12. 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</p>	<p>u) Review of operational processes to ensure that timescales are adhered to</p>	<p>All targets for SCS that are outlined in Hearing Rules are adhered to</p> <p><i>Ongoing – report in Annual Report</i></p>	
<p>13. The Standards Commission will undertake its statutory adjudication role, in relation to alleged breaches of the Codes of Conduct, wholly independently of the CES</p>	<p>v) Effective working relationship with CES</p>	<p>Review effectiveness of relationship with CES</p> <p><i>Internal review Q4 followed by review with CES at quarterly meeting in Q4</i></p>	
	<p>w) Review effectiveness of the revised Hearing Rules, Hearings support & standard casework correspondence</p>	<p>Feedback from panel members obtained and included in Report for SCS meeting in Q4</p> <p>Report to include information about performance against timescales outlined in Hearing Rules</p> <p>Conduct survey of all parties and witnesses involved in the Hearings process (see activity q above)</p> <p><i>Q4</i></p>	
<p>14. If deemed necessary, the Standards Commission will direct the CES to carry out further investigations in potential breach of code cases</p>	<p>Effective working relationship with CES (see activities under objective 13)</p>	<p>See above.</p>	

Strategic Objective 3: 'ENFORCEMENT'**To enforce the Codes of Conduct impartially, timeously and in accordance with legislation**

Actions	Activities	Measurement / Target	Progress Update
15. The Standards Commission will determine whether or not to hold a hearing where a potential breach has been reported by the CES	Effective working relationship with CES (<i>see activities under objective 13</i>)	<i>See above.</i>	
16. In the event of a finding of a breach of the relevant Code, the Hearing Panel will determine the sanction to be applied	Annual review of sanctions imposed to ensure consistency (<i>see activities under objective 13</i>)	<i>See above</i>	

Strategic Objective 4: 'EFFECTIVE'

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

Actions	Activities	Measurement / Target	Progress Update
17. Collective leadership by the Standards Commission in the promotion of ethical standards in Scotland	x) Work with CES to identify improved working practices within the complaints process	Quarterly meetings with CES <i>Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4</i>	
	y) Ongoing professional and personal development of Commission Members and employees	Programme of development achieved and recorded for each Commission Member and employee (reported to HR Committee) <i>Q2</i>	
18. Commitment to the Nine Principles of Public Life in Scotland	z) Successful induction of new member	New Member Appraisal Obtain feedback from new Member on induction pack <i>Q4</i>	
	aa) 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>	
19. The adoption of good practice and governance in the oversight of the Standards Commission's finances and other resources	bb) Annual accounts (2014/15)	Unqualified accounts have to be laid before 31.8.15 Intention is to lay with annual report by 31.8.15 <i>Q2</i>	
	cc) Strategic plan 2016-2021	Consult and agree on a strategic plan to be laid before Parliament before 31.3.16 <i>Q4</i>	

Strategic Objective 4: 'EFFECTIVE'

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

Actions	Activities	Measurement / Target	Progress Update
	dd) Implementation of action points arising from internal and external audits	Programme of audits and associated improvement actions <i>completed by end of Q4</i>	
	ee) Submission of records management plan to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland	Must be submitted before 31 April 2016. <i>Q1</i>	
20. 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	ff) Continuation of current shared services arrangements with SPCB gg) Meetings with Accounts Commission, SPSO, SOLACE and CoSLA	Meeting with SPCB to review effectiveness <i>Annual meeting Q1</i> Develop relationships with other public bodies so any opportunities can be identified , explored and implemented as appropriate <i>Ongoing</i>	
21. Commitment to the Equality Duty principles	hh) Annual assessment of contribution to equalities principles	Completion of Commission Members Annual Appraisals and completion/ review of self-assessments <i>Q1/Q2</i>	