

TO: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

DATE: 18 July 2007

BY: HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES

DISTRICT(S): N/A

ELECTORAL DIVISION
N/A

PURPOSE: FOR DECISION

TITLE: REVIEW OF ETHICAL STANDARDS ISSUES 2006/7

Purpose

This report is an annual summary of:

- Activity which has taken place in support of the Committee's objectives and
- The handling and outcomes of allegations received about Surrey County Councillors

and invites Members to consider what further activities may be needed to strengthen the role of the Committee

1 Terms of Reference

Following discussion at the Standards Committee and a report by the Monitoring Officer to the How the Council Manages its Business Group, at its meeting on 15 May 2007 the Council agreed to revise the terms of reference of the Standards Committee as set out below:

The Standards Committee will have the following roles and functions:

- (a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members of the Council and co-opted Members
- b) assisting Members and co-opted Members to observe the Council's Code of Conduct

- (c) advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct
- (d) monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct
- (e) promoting advice, guidance and training for Members and co-opted Members on matters relating to the Code of Conduct
- (f) considering matters referred to it by or on behalf of the Standards Board for England, or any report from the monitoring officer on any matter referred to him/her by an ethical standards officer
- (g) ensuring that the Council's complaints procedures operate effectively and receiving reports upon them, and upon any findings of maladministration by the Local Government Ombudsman, and including the power to make payments
- (h) dealing with any other matter referred to the Standards Committee by the Standards Board
- (i) granting dispensations to Members (including co-opted Members) from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct

2 Revisions to the Code of Conduct

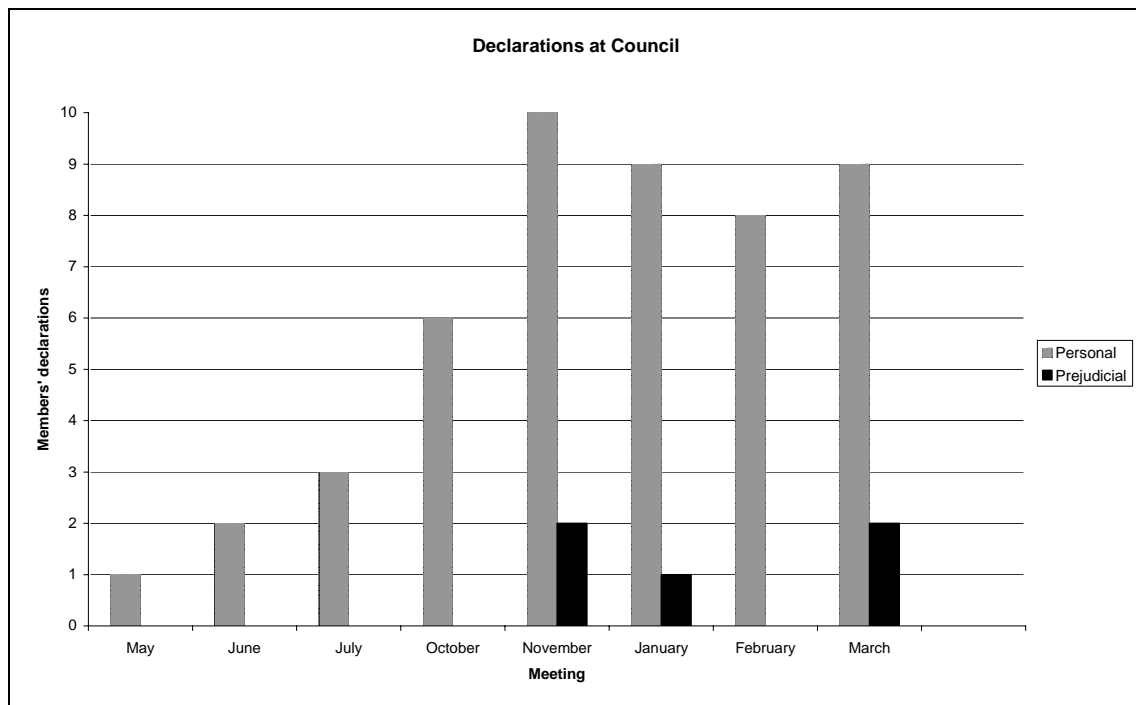
The County Council adopted its local Code, in the form set out in Regulations, on 19 March 2002. No revisions have been made to the Code during the course of this year. At its meeting on 21 February 2007 the Committee considered the Government consultation on amendments to the Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members and the Monitoring Officer responded to the consultation as authorised by the Committee. The revised Code was published in April and will be adopted in the autumn. It is not proposed to recommend any additions to the revised Model Code at this stage. All County Councillors have signed an undertaking to observe the current Code and registered their financial and other interests. During the course of the year Members have been reminded of the need to keep their registered interests under review and to update if necessary.

3 Training Members on the Code of Conduct

There has been no Member training on the Code of Conduct this year. Members will receive training and guidance on the revised Code in September.

4 **Declarations of Interest at County Council**

Below is a chart showing the personal and prejudicial interests declared at Council meetings during the last year. Declarations are consistently made at meetings. The maximum received this year was ten. This was in relation to a debate on the voluntary sector funding with many Members having personal links to Surrey voluntary sector organisations



5 **Dispensations**

To date no request has been received for a dispensation to enable Members to be included in meetings they would not normally be able to attend due to a prejudicial interest.

6 **Complaints about Member Conduct**

During the year 2006/7 there have been two complaints about County Councillors to the Standards Board. In both cases the Standard Board concluded that the complaint did not merit investigation. On 8 September 2006 an appointed Sub Committee of the Standards Committee conducted its first local determination of a complaint against a Surrey County Councillor. This was as a result of a complaint made to the Standards Board in the 2005/6 Council year. On the basis of the facts before the Sub-Committee it concluded that there had been no breach of the Code of Conduct.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to note the report and consider whether there is further action required during the 2007/8 Council year to strengthen the Committee's role in ethical standards matters at Surrey County Council.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: Minutes of Council Meetings during the 2006/7 Council year and Annual Meeting 17 May 2007
