



STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**APPOINTMENT
OF
INDEPENDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

**INFORMATION LEAFLET
FOR APPLICANTS**

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February 2010

ABOUT SURREY

Surrey County Council is one of the leading local authorities in the country, serving a population of approximately one million people in this important area of the South East.

The County is 40 miles (64 kilometres) across from east to west and 25 miles (40 kilometres) deep between the Thames and the Sussex border. Within this area there is some of the most beautiful and varied countryside in southern England. This includes the panorama of the North Downs and tranquil stretches of the River Thames while the rich variety of wildlife, historic buildings, villages and towns adds to the County's places of interest and recreation.

The County has excellent road and rail links which offer easy access to London or the countryside while Heathrow and Gatwick airports are just beyond the county boundary.

County Hall, Surrey's administrative headquarters, is situated in Kingston upon Thames, a busy town that offers excellent amenities.

The provision of local government services is the responsibility of the County Council and eleven District and Borough Councils. The County Council is made up of 80 elected councillors (or "Members") elected every four years, each of whom represents a constituency known as a division with an average electorate of 10,000 voters. The last elections were held in May 2009, following which the Conservatives retained control of the Council. The number of seats currently held by each party is Conservative 56, Liberal Democrat 13, Independent/Residents Association 10, Labour 1. The next County Council elections will be held in May 2013.

County Councillors are elected to direct the policies and activities of Surrey County Council on behalf of the public. All Members attend meetings of the full Council, which meets regularly throughout the year at County Hall. The Council sets the framework in which the Cabinet - as the day to day decision making body - operates, through approval or modification of the Corporate Plan, Budget and designated statutory and non-statutory plans. It is informed in taking decisions by reports from the Cabinet, Select Committees and Local Committees, and by Members raising issues of concern.

POLITICAL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Council operates a permanent Cabinet and Select Committee system under the Local Government Act 2000.

In June 2009, the Council appointed a new Leader for a four-year term. The Leader has appointed a Deputy Leader, who is responsible for ensuring that the Council has effective governance and efficient processes. He has also appointed eight further Portfolio Holders to his Cabinet. The portfolios for the Cabinet are:

- Adult Social Care
- Community Safety
- Community Services
- Children and Families
- Children and Learning (*statutory lead member for Children's Services under the Children Act 2004*)
- Corporate Services
- Environment
- Transport

Cabinet meets on a monthly basis and concentrates on the strategic issues facing the Council. Cabinet Members also have delegated powers to take decisions.

There are eleven Local Committees which operate within each of the Surrey District/Borough Council areas which will advise and take decisions on services delegated to them by the Executive.

In addition, eight Select Committees provide policy advice to the Executive and scrutinise its decisions to ensure that it is acting in accordance with the County Council's policies and strategies, and monitor the impact of any decisions made on Surrey residents.

By law, some activities must be conducted by committees whose membership reflects the political make-up of the County Council. This work is undertaken by the Planning & Regulatory Committee; Personnel and Appointments Committee; and Audit and Governance Committee.

Finally, each local authority must set up a Standards Committee in accordance with procedures and regulations laid down by Parliament.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The composition of the Standards Committee is regulated by Parliament. Where a Standards Committee has more than three Members, then at least 25% must be Independent Members/Representatives. Surrey's Standards Committee comprises six councillors (who may not include the Leader) and four people who are not councillors or officers of the Council or any other body having a Standards Committee; these are defined as "**The Independent Representatives**". The appointments of the Independent Representatives are subject to approval by a majority of the Members of the Council. Independent Representatives have full voting rights at meetings. A quorum for a meeting of the Committee is three Members of which at least one must be an Independent Representative. The Chairman of Standards Committee must be drawn from among its Independent Representatives.

The Standards Committee has 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 Codes of Conduct (the Code can be found with the Constitution of the Council on the website www.surreycc.gov.uk);
- (c) advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Member's 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) assessing any written allegation that a Member or co-opted member of the Council has failed or may have failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and determining what (if any) further action needs to be taken;
- (g) considering matters referred to it by the Monitoring Officer (who, in Surrey, is the Head of Legal Services) or an ethical standards officer of the Standards Board for England;
- (h) ensuring that the Council's complaints procedures operate effectively and receiving reports on them, and on any findings of maladministration by the Local Government Ombudsman, and including the power to make payments;
- (i) granting dispensations to Members (including co-opted Members) from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct;

- (j) considering applications from members of staff for exemption from political restriction in respect of a post they hold with the Council;
- (k) considering applications that the Council be directed to include any post in the list of politically restricted posts maintained by the Council.

Meetings of Standards Committee are usually held during the day (starting at 10.30am) and take place at County Hall. There are approximately six Standards Committee meetings a year. Members are expected to spend time preparing for the meetings in advance.

Upcoming meetings for 2010 are as follows:

Monday 14 June 2010
Friday 23 July 2010

Further dates to follow.

General Purposes Sub-Committees

All members of Standards Committee sit on one of two General Purposes Sub-Committees. These have delegated responsibility for:

- initial assessments of complaints that Councillors have failed, or may have failed to comply with the Authority's Code of Conduct;
- reviewing, upon request by the complainant, a decision of the alternative Sub-Committee that no action be taken in respect of an allegation;
- consideration of a report by the Monitoring Officer following an investigation;
- deciding whether a Councillor has breached the Code of Conduct and, if so, decide if a sanction should be applied and what form the sanction should take;
- considering requests for dispensations to allow Members to speak and vote at a meeting where they have a prejudicial interest; and
- considering applications from employees for exemption from political restriction or review of any post not included in the list of politically restricted posts.

The two Sub-Committees meet alternately, approximately 20 working days apart, resulting in bi-monthly meetings, i.e. six meetings per Sub-Committee. Members are expected to spend time preparing for the meetings in advance. These meetings are also held during the day (starting at 10.30am) and take place at County Hall.

TRAINING

All members of the Standards Committee are expected to participate in specific training (for example dealing with local determinations), which will be arranged as appropriate.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Strong candidates will be:

- honest and able to demonstrate the highest standards of conduct in their own life;
- keenly interested in local government and serving the local community;
- independently minded and able to weigh/sort evidence and reach objective conclusions on standards, ethics and probity;
- comfortable with speaking in meetings and being publicly accountable for decisions;
- willing and able to act as the Chairman of Standards Committee or one of its Sub-Committees;
- able to work well with others in promoting the highest standards of conduct within the Council.

You will be ineligible for this position if you are:

- a Member or officer of the County Council (or have been in the past 5 years);
- a Member or officer of any other Council or relevant authority as listed in the Local Government Act 2000;
- or a relative or close friend of a Member or officer of the County Council.

If you are called for interviews you will be asked to sign a declaration form confirming that you are not ineligible for any of the above reasons.

Given the nature of the posts, candidates will need to declare whether they have had any criminal convictions and where relevant these will be considered carefully when deciding upon the suitability of particular candidates.

Candidates should not be members of any political parties or lobbying groups or organisations.

INDEPENDENT REPRESENTATIVE: SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Applicants are asked to address how they meet each of the following competencies either within their CV or a supporting statement:

Demonstrates experience of and/or commitment to promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct.	D
Demonstrates high standards of personal integrity.	E
Able to be objective, independent and impartial.	E
Demonstrates sound questioning and decision-making skills.	E
Demonstrates leadership qualities, particularly in respect of exercising sound judgement.	E
Awareness of challenges of working within a political environment.	D
Able to absorb information from complex reports and documents.	E
Able to communicate effectively.	E
Working knowledge of ICT, including email packages.	D
Able to work with others, have regard to their views and reach consensus.	E
Willing to undertake appropriate training.	E
Committed to maintaining confidentiality in appropriate circumstances.	E

(D=Desirable; E=Essential)

REMUNERATION

An Independent Representative receives an annual allowance of £500, or £1,500 if they are appointed as Chairman of Standards Committee. An Independent Representative receives a further £20 per hour for sitting on a panel in the event of an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct, or £40 per hour if they chair the panel. Travelling and subsistence expenses are also payable.

APPLICATIONS

Applications should be made via the jobs section of the Council website www.surreycc.gov.uk. You will be asked to provide some details and will then be able to attach their CV and supporting statement explaining how your skills and abilities match the competencies as detailed in the person specification for this role. Please note: The application system will only accept the uploading of one document so please ensure that you combine the above as one file.

APPOINTMENT PROCESS

It is intended that a panel will short-list and interview applicants with a view to making a recommendation to the full Council on 11 May 2010 for the appointment of an Independent Member.

CLOSING DATE: 12 March 2010

If you need any further information, please call Cheryl Hardman, Standards Committee Manager (0208 541 9075) or Bryan Searle, Senior Manager Scrutiny and Regulation (020 8541 9019).