

APPENDIX C

(To agenda item 8 – Recommendations of the Governance Task Group and Promoting the Work of the Committee)

WORK OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

- Standards Committee has surveyed Members and senior officers about perceived standards of conduct at Surrey and shared the results with them. The Interim Chief Executive commended this work to all Members and to senior officers.
- An online quarterly training bulletin on standards issues has been established, with a link sent to members and senior officers. This includes information on the Code of Conduct, as well as news of the Standards Committee and Standards for England. The bulletin will encourage feedback and debate and the Monitoring Officer has set up askthemo@surreycc.gov.uk as a dedicated channel to receive queries and comments on ethical standards issues.
- There are clear and detailed web pages about Standards Committee on the Council's public website. These include pen portraits of the Independent Representatives and information on the complaints system. (This is commended as good practice by Standards for England)
- Changes to the process for complaining about Members have been promoted on the Council's website and with a press release, which was also published on the Council's public website.
- Training was provided for all Members following the local elections in June 2009 on the Code of Conduct. The Chairman of Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer led this. It was lively session with a number of Members acting out scenarios to encourage discussion about the Code.
- Training was also provided to the eleven local committees, including the Borough Members on the specific implications of the Code of Conduct for Local Committee Members.
- Reports of Standards Committee meetings are taken to the next Council meeting. They are presented by the Independent Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Committee and the Council has opportunities to ask questions about the work of the Committee.
- The Council has policy custodians who monitor and report annually on the effectiveness of policies. The Monitoring Officer has officer responsibility for the Members' Code of Conduct and ethical standards regime.
- Guidance for Members on gifts and hospitality is appended to the Member Code of Conduct. The Staff Code of Conduct also includes a section on gifts and hospitality.
- There is a strong focus on Member development. All councillors have been offered the opportunity to have a personal development plan.
- The induction information provided to Members following the 2009 election included details of upcoming training and development opportunities.

- Members were asked how they wish to receive training as part of the feedback on the induction of the new Council. The possibility of e-learning courses for Members is under investigation.
- Surrey is signed up to Modern Councillor, an e-learning service for Members that includes a module on the Code of Conduct. Officers are investigating how best to inform Members about its use.
- All councillors sitting on Planning and Regulatory Committee must receive training before taking up their position.
- An up-dated recruitment pack has been developed for the appointment of independent representatives in 2010.
- The Chairman of Standards Committee has regular meetings with the Leader, Deputy Leader, Opposition Group Leaders, and Chief Executive to discuss Standards Committee and the standards agenda at Surrey County Council.
- The Chairman of Standards Committee wrote to candidates prior to the last election and to every newly elected Member to stress the importance of good standards.
- Standards Committee has a work plan that is kept under review by officers. It also has an action tracker to ensure that actions agreed by the Committee are taken forward.
- Standards Committee has agreed to publish an Annual Report.