

**REPORT OF THE  
MONITORING OFFICER  
2012**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This is the eighth Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer for the period January 2012 to December 2012. The purpose of the report is not only to provide an overview of the work of the Monitoring Officer in the past year, but also to provide an opportunity to review and learn from experience. This report therefore sets out the Monitoring Officer's statutory responsibilities and summarises how these duties have been discharged from the last Monitoring Officer's Report for the period January 2011 to December 2011. The Report also highlights the work of the Standards Committee.

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Standards Committee comments on and notes the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report.

That the Full Council notes the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report.

### **2. THE ROLE OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

The role of the Monitoring Officer derives from the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Act requires local authorities to appoint a Monitoring Officer.

The Monitoring Officer has a broad role in ensuring the lawfulness and fairness of Council decision making, ensuring compliance with Codes and Protocols and promoting good governance and high ethical standards.

A Summary of the Monitoring Officer's Functions is as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Source</u>
Report on contraventions or likely contraventions of any enactment or rule of law	Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Report on any maladministration or injustice where the Ombudsman has carried out an investigation	Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Appoint a Deputy	Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Establish and maintain the Register of Members' interests.	The Localism Act 2011 (Commencement No. 6 and Transitional, Savings and Transitory Provisions) Order 2012 The Localism Act 2011 The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012
Report on sufficiency of resources.	Local Government and Housing Act 1989

<u>Description</u>	<u>Source</u>
Maintain the Constitution	The Constitution
Promote and maintain high standards of conduct.	The Localism Act 2011
Grant Dispensations	The Localism Act 2011 and delegation from Council
Consulting with, supporting and advising the Head of Paid Service and Chief Finance Officer on issues of lawfulness and probity.	The Constitution
Appointing an Investigating Officer in relation to Member Complaints	The Localism Act 2011 and the Constitution
Advising the Standards Hearings Sub Committee in relation to allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct and advising when matters are determined following an investigation	The Localism Act 2011 and the Constitution
Advise on whether executive decisions are within the Budget & Policy Framework.	The Constitution
Provide advice on vires issues, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity, Budget and Policy Framework issues to all members.	The Constitution and s.5 of Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Legal Advice and Support to the authority	The Constitution
Considering whether certain Information is exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.	Freedom of Information Act 2000

### **3. THE CONSTITUTION**

The Constitution sets out how the Council operates and how decisions are made. It sets out the procedures which are followed to ensure that these decisions are efficient, transparent and that those who make the decisions are accountable to local people. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for ensuring that the Constitution operates efficiently, is properly maintained and is adhered to.

### **3.1 Constitutional Review and Revision**

Since the modular constitution was produced by the Secretary of State in 2000 there has never been any revision of that model. However, this Council has continued to update its Constitution as necessary with a re-write having taken place in 2007.

The Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (Acses) is currently working to produce a new model Constitution in conjunction with Dickinson Dees who run a software platform produced by a software provider *Exari*. By this means a new model constitution will be produced, with the numerous variables that must be within it as Councils have the ability to move to differing systems of decision making under the Localism Act 2011. The design of the software will allow for production of a draft constitution, tailored to a relevant extent to differing councils' models of governance, quickly and easily. The Model and decision system will be assessed from a link on the Acses website. Acses members (the Monitoring Officer being one) may then use the package to produce a draft constitution from the model bank of precedents. As legislation requires further changes, the Acses editorial board will determine and publish "best practice" in the use of variants within the Model. With all the changes being implemented by the Localism Act 2011 this model will no doubt prove a valuable asset that this Council may utilise.

### **3.2 Fitness for Purpose**

The Constitution sets out in clear terms how the Council operates and how decisions are made. Some of these processes are required by law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose. The purpose of the Constitution is to:

- ensure that those responsible for decision making are clearly identifiable to local people and that they explain the reasons for decisions;
- support the active involvement of local people in local authority decision making;
- help Members represent local people more effectively;
- enable decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively; and
- hold decision makers to public account.

### **3.3 Managing the Constitution**

Any significant changes to the Council's decision making arrangements and Committee structure need to be approved by full Council. The Council will monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure that the aims and principles of the Constitution are given full effect.

## **4. LAWFULNESS AND MALADMINISTRATION**

The Monitoring Officer is the Council's lead adviser on issues of lawfulness and the Council's powers and in consultation with the Head of Paid Service and the Chief Financial Officer advises on compliance with the Budget and Policy Framework. Part of this role involves monitoring Committee reports, agendas and decisions to ensure compliance with legislation and the Constitution. The Monitoring Officer ensures that agendas, reports and minutes of all Council meetings are made publicly available unless

there is a reason for exemption under the Local Government Act 1972. In addition Portfolio Holder decisions are also made publicly available subject to the same caveat as are all planning and licensing decisions made by Officers. All such decisions can be viewed by members of the public through the Council's website: [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk).

If the Monitoring Officer considers that any proposal, decision or omission would give rise to unlawfulness or if any decision or omission has given rise to maladministration she must report to the full Council or where appropriate the Cabinet after first consulting with the Head of Paid Service and Chief Financial Officer. Any proposal or decision that is subject to such a report cannot be implemented until the report has been considered.

The sound governance arrangements operated by the Council ensure that the power to report potentially unlawful decision making is rarely used and the Monitoring Officer has not had to issue such a report throughout 2012.

#### **4.1 Reports from the Local Government Ombudsman**

The annual letter for 2011/12 from the Local Government Ombudsman sets out a summary of statistics on the complaints made to the Ombudsman about the Council for the year.

In 2011 the Ombudsman changed the way they communicate their findings. They no longer give tailored feedback unless there are concerns with an Authority. Instead they provide statistics on the number of enquiries and complaints that they receive and they show the time taken by an authority to respond to written enquiries.

The Ombudsman was pleased to comment that there were no concerns about Sevenoaks District Council's response times and there were no issues arising from the complaints that had been brought to the Ombudsman's attention.

The Ombudsman has indicated that they are planning to launch an open publication scheme during the next year where they will be publishing on their website the final decision statements on all complaints. Making more information publicly available will increase their openness and transparency, and enhance their accountability. Their aim is to provide a comprehensive picture of complaint decisions and reasons for councils and the public. This is to help inform citizens about local services and create a new source of information on maladministration, service failure and injustice.

The statistics show that there were 18 enquiries and complaints in total, 2 of which were deemed to be premature. The Ombudsman provided advice to 5 enquirers and 11 were forwarded to the investigative team.

When an investigation is complete the Ombudsman generally issues a report. However, this year the Ombudsman did not issue any reports against the Authority and only two of the complaints resulted in a local settlement being reached.

The average time taken by the Authority to reply to the Ombudsman's written enquires was 31.6 days, which is within the target time of 29 to 35 days.

#### **5. GOOD GOVERNANCE**

The Monitoring Officer has a pro-active role in promoting good practice, good procedures and good governance. This involves networking, collaboration and joined-up working

practices and decision making as well as ensuring standing orders, codes of practice, procedures are kept under review and up to date. Collaborative working entails regular monthly liaison meetings with the three Statutory Officers, Heads of Service/Management Team as well as working in partnership with other departments to develop and disseminate policies and procedures. There is also the work undertaken in partnership with other authorities.

Successes this year included the Council retaining its prestigious Gold status from “Investors in People” on 6 December following a rigorous inspection. “Investors in People” is the nationally recognised people management standard, which is awarded to organisations that are committed to supporting and developing their staff to achieve their business goals.

The assessors inspect private and public organizations, over a third of the UK workforce, and evaluate the culture, staff and company values against the established Investor in People standards. Less than 1% of the organisations inspected go on to achieve the Gold standard.

This is the second time the Council has secured the sought after Gold accolade. It has also held Investor in People status since 1997.

On 20 July 2012, Sevenoaks District hosted the London 2012 Torch Relay. Sevenoaks District Council was handed responsibility for organising crowd safety en route and some 25,000 people watched the Olympic Flame in person as it passed through the District.

The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) presented Sevenoaks District Council with a certificate thanking its Members and staff for organising a successful event.

During September, Sevenoaks District hosted the London 2012 Paralympic Games road cycling at Brands Hatch in West Kingsdown. Half of the circuit was within the former F1 race course with the remainder on public roads. Sevenoaks District Council took responsibility for managing crowd safety on the public highway part of the course and community engagement as a number of local roads were closed for six days for training and racing.

As the a global audience tuned in and thousands of people watched the races unfold from inside and outside Brands Hatch, the event passed off as planned and was, according to the Department for Culture Media and Support, a resounding success. The Council’s efforts were recognised with a certificate from Seb Coe, representing LOCOG, and the International Paralympic Committee.

## **6. THE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK AND WORK OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The New Standards Committee which was introduced on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2012 comprises 7 Members in accordance with the political balance rules. Prior to this the committee comprised sixteen Members. The new terms of reference for the committee makes provision for the appointment of up to two co-opted Members of a parish or town council although such Members would not have voting rights. Such Members have not been appointed.

An Independent Person who has a statutory role under the Localism Act 2011, was appointed by the Council on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2012. The Independent Person is not a Member of the Standards Committee although they are given details of the Committee's meeting date in order that they may attend. The Independent Person assists the Monitoring Officer in considering complaints and will also be consulted by the Monitoring Officer following investigations to help decide what action to take. The Independent Person may also be contacted by Councillors who are the subject of any complaint.

The Standards Committee has a key role in facilitating and promoting the Ethical Framework and in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct within the Authority. The terms of reference of the new committee are set out within Part 3 of the Constitution entitled "Standards Committee".

Examples of the Standards Committee's work during 2012 is as follows:

- Receive the Annual Monitoring Officer's Report
- Work to Establish the New Standards Regime under the Localism Act 2011
- Establishing a Task Group to consider the following proposals:
  - A New Code of Conduct
  - A New Standards Committee with Terms of Reference and Delegations to the Standards Committee
  - Revised procedures for dealing with Misconduct Complaints including arrangements for the investigation of complaints alleging a breach of the Member's Code of Conduct.
  - A Complaint Form
  - A Register of Interests form
  - A system for Granting Dispensations
  - Suggested Non Pecuniary Interests
  - A procedure for making a recommendation for the Appointment of an Independent Person
  - Job Description for an Independent Person and Person Specification

## **6.1 Maintaining a Register of Member Interests**

The codes of conduct of relevant authorities must include provision for the registration and disclosure of “disclosable pecuniary interests”, as defined in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012. Members with disclosable pecuniary interests in the business of their authorities are prohibited from participating in such business unless they have a dispensation. The Localism Act 2011 has introduced criminal offences relating to failure to register disclosable pecuniary interests. Members convicted of such offences are liable to a scale 5 fine and may also be disqualified from being a councillor for up to five years.

Disclosable pecuniary interests are defined in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 and are not the same as personal and prejudicial interests.

Members at this Council through training have been made aware that even if a Member’s interest does not amount to a disclosable pecuniary interest, if their interest in a matter would lead them to predetermine a decision, it would not be appropriate for that member to participate in the decision, If they did so the decision could be vulnerable to challenge.

## **6.2 Code of Conduct for Employees**

The Code is based on an original draft published by the IDeA and has been updated since being implemented in 2006. The Code forms part of the employers’ terms and conditions of employment. The Code is well publicised on the Council’s internal intranet and is introduced to employees through the induction process.

Under the Code employees must declare any non-financial or financial interests that they or members of their family have which they consider could conflict with the Council’s interests. Directors and the Chief Executive declarations of non-financial or financial interests are declared to the Monitoring Officer.

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors should be made known to the employees’ Head of Service and Director.

All hospitality received and given should be appropriate, necessary and must, wherever possible, have the prior sanction of the Head of Service or Director and must be recorded in the Hospitality book kept within Corporate Resources. There is a Protocol on Corruption, Gifts and Hospitality contained within the Staff Code of Conduct.

## **6.3 Whistle Blowing**

The Council’s Whistle Blowing Policy was amended in March 2012 to reflect the requirements of the Bribery Act 2010. The Policy sets out how to raise concerns within the organisation with employees encouraged in the first instance to raise concerns with their immediate manager or superior.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing and there is a dedicated telephone number which allows communication in confidence to the Audit and Fraud Team.

A record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger confidentiality) is maintained and reported (in such a way as to preserve confidentiality), to the relevant committee of the Council.

The Policy is intended to provide an avenue within the Council to raise concerns. However, if it is felt that it is right to take the matter outside the Council contact points are given as follows:

- Public Concern at Work
- The Audit Commission
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- Relevant voluntary organisation
- The police
- Trade Union representative
- Local Government Ombudsman

In the last calendar year no concerns have been raised under the Whistle Blowing Policy.

#### **6.4 Human Resources Strategy and Workforce Plan**

A Human Resources Strategy and Workforce Plan is available on the Council's internal intranet which incorporates many policies, strategies and procedures. These are regularly reviewed in line with legislative changes.

#### **6.5 New Standards**

The Localism Act 2011 and subordinate legislation made extensive changes to the Standards regime which had previously applied under the Local Government Act 2000 and subordinate legislation. The changes are to achieve high standards of conduct and to put in place an appropriate regime.

Under the new regime Councils have been obliged to adopt a Code of Conduct for their Members and Co-opted Members as part of their duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. These include provisions relating to the registration and disclosure of interests although, unlike the arrangements under the previous legislation, authorities were no longer required to adopt codes based on a national model. However, most authorities have chosen to adopt codes which reflect models suggested by various recognised organisations. Sevenoaks District Council chose the text published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Town and Parish Councils will have adopted their own Codes although they must be based on the seven Nolan principles laid down in the Localism Act 2011. The District Council encouraged Town and Parishes to adopt the Sevenoaks District Council Code,

although it is known that some have adopted the National Association of Local Council's model.

Councils in England are no longer required to have the statutory Standards committee which was established under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008. However, the majority of Councils did choose to retain such a committee including Sevenoaks District Council. The new standards committee is an ordinary committee of the council which means that it is politically balanced and subject to the usual requirements relating to access to information. They are not required to include independent members and if they did such members would be non-voting. This Council chose not to appoint independent members

The Localism Act 2011 obliged Councils to put in place arrangements for investigating and making decisions in respect of allegations of breach of their code of conduct. This Council was also obliged to put in place such arrangements for Parish/Town Councils, although it is for the Parish/Town Council to decide what, if anything to do as a result of a finding of breach of their code of conduct.

The arrangements that an authority has had to put in place for dealing with allegations of breach of their code of conduct must include provision for the appointment of at least one independent person. The independent person must be consulted by authorities on allegations they have decided to investigate and may also be consulted by members who are the subject of an allegation of breach of the relevant authority's code of conduct.

Authorities were given discretion as to the exact arrangements that they put in place in relation to the new regime. The Member Task Group that undertook this challenging exercise for the Council struck a balance between ensuring that the arrangements that they proposed were fair to members and complainants and any other interested parties whilst avoiding arrangements which were over-bureaucratic, complicated and lengthy. The importance that the Task Group placed on the principles of natural justice meant that the Task Group proposals set out provisions for investigations and hearings. However, the Group ensured that the new system would give greater scope to seek to resolve allegations without investigating them. This means that only allegations of serious breaches would go forward for investigation.

Under the Localism Act 2011 authorities are not obliged to include provisions in their arrangements for members to be able to appeal against findings that they have breached the codes of conduct of their authorities. This Council decided not to include appeal provisions in their arrangements although for procedural irregularity a complaint can always be made to the Ombudsman.

The Localism Act 2011 makes no provision for sanctions against Members who are found to have breached the codes of conduct of their authorities. However, authorities are able to censure members, to publicise breaches of their codes of conduct, to report to their Councils and to recommend that members are removed from positions on committees and outside bodies. This Council decided to include provisions for the Monitoring Officer to be instructed to arrange training for the Member and/or conciliation if appropriate which is a useful practical measure for improving member conduct.

## **6.6 Complaints against Members**

**Allegations of Member Misconduct dealt with by the Assessment Sub-Committee of the Standards Committee between 1st January 2011 and 23<sup>th</sup> July 2012 under the old system**

Total allegations made:	17
District Councillors	1
Parish/Town Councillors	16
Complaints in which no action was taken	5
Complaints where other action was recommended	9
Referred cases sent for local investigation and determination	2
Complaints withdrawn	1

**Allegations of Member Misconduct between 24<sup>th</sup> July 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 under New Standards**

Total allegations made:	
District Councillors	0
Parish/Town Councillors	15

The number of Member misconduct allegations increased this year from 7 last year to 32 this year. Under the old system, before New Standards was implemented on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2012, 15 of the complaints out of a total of 17 involved only one Town Council. No action was taken in relation to 5 cases and other action was recommended in 9 cases. One case was withdrawn and two cases were referred for investigation.

In relation to the cases referred for investigation The Localism Act 2011 (Commencement No.6 and Transitional, Savings and Transitory Provisions) Order 2012/1463) was made on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012 which brought to an end the old standards regime. The new Order meant that the 2 complaints to be investigated could not go forward and the matters came to an end. One of the complaints involved the following allegations:

- Bullying and intimidation
- Using your position improperly
- Disrepute

The other complaint involved an allegation surrounding treating others with respect.

Five of the cases involving a recommendation of other action involved the Monitoring Officer liaising with the Clerk to the authority concerned to engage an external, independent, mediator/conciliator at the expense of the Town Council between the complainant and the subject member, but also to the wider membership of that authority. The Town Clerk indicated that the suggestion had been noted but no further action was taken.

Under New Standards there has been 15 complaints involving Parish/Town Councils. Eleven of these cases involved one Parish Council. Two of the 15 cases were withdrawn, and two cases failed the initial intake test as they were outside the 90 day deadline for receipt from the date when the alleged incident took place. One case was held up as the matter had been referred to the Kent Police. We subsequently received confirmation that the Police deem that there are no criminal offences and are taking no further action. We are now awaiting the subject member's right of reply.

Nine cases were delayed as a result of the local Police Commissioner's Elections which took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012 as the Initial Intake Test creates a 6 week embargo on processing matters prior to an election.

Rights of reply have been received in all cases other than one (the one delayed due to the police involvement) before going forward to Assessment. Subject Members are given 30 days to respond with their right of reply.

All rights of reply are forwarded to the independent person who will have received all complaints that pass initial intake.

It is hoped that all cases currently awaiting assessment will be processed in January 2013.

## **7. EQUALITIES AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY UNDER THE EQUALITY ACT 2010**

As a community leader, service provider and employer Sevenoaks District Council recognises that everyone has a contribution to make to our society and a right to access services without being discriminated against or disadvantaged because of their:

- Race, colour, nationality, ethnicity.
- Gender, marital status or caring responsibility.
- Sexual orientation.
- Age.
- Physical or mental disability or mental health.
- Religion or belief.
- Health status.
- Employment status.

## **8. SUPPORT TO COUNCIL, CABINET, SCRUTINY AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The distribution and publication of committee reports, agendas and decisions is central to meeting the requirements of a key deliverable. It is the Monitoring Officer's responsibility to oversee the process and ensure that these documents comply with statutory and constitutional requirements.

This includes:

- Distributing and publishing all agendas within five clear working days of the meeting taking place and ensuring that all agendas are compliant with the access to information rules and exempt information is marked up accordingly.
- Advertising public meetings five clear days before the meeting date.
- Ensuring that papers are made available to the public.
- Drafting minutes for publication within nine working days.
- Publishing a record of all decisions including key decisions taken by Cabinet within 48 hours (2 working days) of the meeting.
- Ensuring that petitions are handled in accordance with the Council's Constitution including e-petitioning.
- Ensuring that meetings are accessible.
- Complying with the new requirements of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

## **9. STATUTORY MEETINGS ANALYSIS**

One of the explicit aims of the Council has been to try and streamline the decision making process to allow Council to focus on service delivery.

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011 and 1<sup>st</sup> December 2012 the following were serviced:

Full Council Meetings (including 1 annual meeting)	7
Cabinet	12
Performance and Governance Committee	5
Electoral Arrangement Committee	3
Environment Select Committee	5
Services Select Committee	5
Social Affairs Select Committee	5
Modern Local Government Group	3
Development Control Committee	15
Standards Committee	1

Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board	4
Licensing Committee	5

Other meetings serviced include 8 Licensing Committee hearings and 4 Assessment Sub-Committee meetings of the Standards Committee up to the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012.

The volume of meetings represents a substantial commitment of both Councillors' and Officers' time and resources. It is of great importance that meetings constitute an effective use of time and resources; that they add value to corporate effectiveness and help in meeting the aims and objectives of the Constitution and the Community Plan.

## **10. Notice of Key Decisions which replaces the Forward Plan**

The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 replaced the 2000 Executive Access to Information Regulations. The new regulations only apply to executive decisions. Previously there was a requirement to publish a rolling forward plan at least 14 days before the start of each month that set out details of all the key decisions which the authority anticipated making within the next four months. This has now been replaced by a requirement to publish a 28 clear day's notice of any intended key decision. This notice is available for inspection and is also published on the authority's website. If an urgent decision is required and it is impracticable to give the full notice, the key decision can still be taken if the authority gives at least five days' clear notice to all of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the authority which can then call in the decision to check that it was genuinely urgent. Where a key decision is so urgent there is not even time to give five clear days' notice, the authority can still take the decision if the Chairman of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed that the key decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred.

This new requirement is being observed by the authority and by publishing the Notice of Key Decisions the public will be able to find out the expected timing of key decisions.

### **10.2 Call-In requests**

There were no call-in requests within 2012.

### **10.3 Overview and Scrutiny**

The Council is required by Law to discharge certain overview and scrutiny functions. These functions are an essential component of local democracy. Overview and Scrutiny Committees are powerful committees that contribute to the development of Council policies and also hold the Executive to account for its decisions. Another key part of the overview and scrutiny role is to review existing policies, consider proposals for new policies and suggest new policies. The Council has three Scrutiny Committees, Services Select, Social Affairs and Environment Select that look at a wide range of issues within their terms of reference.

## **10.4 MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The New Standards and Conduct Arrangements for Members was adopted by the Full Council on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2012 and briefing reports on the new system were circulated prior to adoption.

Specialist training on the Code of Conduct and Standards was given on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2012 by Claire Lefort an Associate at Weightmans Solicitors and a recognised expert in the field of governance. Areas covered by the training included:

- Localism Act 2011
- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests
- Non Pecuniary Interests
- DCLG guidance
- Standards Committees
- Independent Persons
- Receiving Complaints
- Sanctions
- Bias and Predetermination
- Examination of Case Studies

The training session was well attended with 20 Parish/Town Councils attending and 30 District Councillors attending.

Training for the Independent Person took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012.

The Monitoring Officer employs an open door policy allowing District Council Members to call in at any time to receive advice.

The New Standards Committee will work as a cohesive group to promote high standards across the whole district.

## **11 CONCLUSION**

The Monitoring Officer's role in conjunction with the Standards Committee encompasses both proactive and reactive elements. The proactive role centres on raising standards, encouraging ethical behaviour, increasing awareness and utilisation of the elements of good governance and ensuring that robust procedures are in place.

The reactive role focuses on taking appropriate action to deal with issues and potential problems as they arise. The Monitoring Officer together with the Standards Committee's effectiveness in this role is in turn dependent on effective systems and procedures being in place to identify problems and ensure that Members, Officers and Public are aware of appropriate channels to raise concerns.

Christine Nuttall  
Monitoring Officer