

**REPORT OF THE
MONITORING OFFICER
2013**

Introduction

This is the ninth Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer for the period January 2013 to December 2013. 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 2012 to December 2012. 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 s.151 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

This Council continues to update its Constitution as and when necessary and reports to the Governance Committee of the Council in this respect.

On the 23rd April 2013 Council approved a proposed new governance structure following Members concerns with the previous structure in the following areas:

Perception of remoteness/inaccessibility of portfolios; feeling of disengagement from influence and decision-making; lack of training and development (succession planning for future Cabinet members); and the need to streamline the system to match the resource available.

The approval was subject to detailed mechanisms being brought back to the Annual Council in May 2013 to enable implementation of the structure with a review of the new governance arrangements being undertaken and reported back to Full Council by April 2014. In addition, options requiring more detailed consideration, such as the Committee System or a Hybrid Model requiring Secretary of State approval, were to be investigated during the next municipal year. The new governance structure was accordingly approved at Annual Council on the 14th May 2013.

The Governance Committee has started the review of the new governance structure and to date have invited Members to give their views on the new governance arrangements through a survey. The questions were focused on whether the new arrangements meet with the initial aims and have suitably addressed Members' concerns. The results of the survey along with other research will be reported to Full Council in April next year.

On the 19th February 2013 Council approved a senior management restructure and as a result consequential changes needed to be made to the Constitution in order for these to be in place when the new senior management structure took effect on 1st September 2013. The necessary amendments were made under delegated authority and later approved by Council on the 1st October 2013.

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. The Governance Committee ensures that this takes place.

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/s.151 Officer and the Chief Finance 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.

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/s.151 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 2013.

4.1 Reports from the Local Government Ombudsman

The annual letter from the Local Government Ombudsman used to set out a summary of statistics on the complaints made to the Ombudsman about the Council for the year.

The annual letter this year, only presents the total number of complaints received and does not provide the more detailed information that the Local Government Ombudsman offered in previous years. The reason for this is that they have changed their business processes during the course of the year and therefore could not provide a consistent set of data for the entire year.

In 2012/13 the Local Government Ombudsman received 11 complaints about our local authority with 8 decisions being made and this statistic compares favourably with the average number of complaints received by other District/Borough Councils.

No compensation payments were made by Sevenoaks District Council in relation to the complaints that went to the Local Government Ombudsman and there was no finding of maladministration.

5. Report of the Chief Surveillance Commissioner

On the 19th June 2013 the Council was inspected by the Office of the Surveillance Commissioner (OSC). These inspections are carried out on a 3 yearly basis.

The Regulations of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) introduced a statutory framework for those carrying out a surveillance as part of an investigation. The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (2012 Act) amended RIPA to provide additional controls. The internal authorisation process is now followed by external authorisation from a Justice of the Peace.

For the Council surveillance activities are most likely to be carried out within the areas of benefit fraud and environmental health. However, in practice the District Council seeks to carry out enforcement activity by overt means whereby it is not necessary to engage the provisions of RIPA.

On the 10th September 2013 the Audit Committee considered a report recommending the adoption of a revised surveillance policy and the approval of reporting arrangements to Elected Members following the Commissioner's inspection.

In the last three years there has been only one instance of covert monitoring which had related to a housing benefit contravention where it has been necessary to undertake surveillance outside a house. No surveillance operations have taken place in the last three months.

Training on RIPA for officers of this Council took place on the 11th November 2013 with an emphasis on allowing delegates to do their job whilst respecting the law. Delegates worked through a number of real life case studies and exercises in order to discuss issues that commonly arise.

Council on the 1st October 2013 noted the Chief Surveillance Commissioner's report, adopted the revised Surveillance Policy and agreed an annual report with quarterly updates being made to Councillors by e-mail in addition to being available on the Members Electronic Portal.

6. 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 weekly meetings with the Chief Executive/s.151 officer, Chief Officers/Senior 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.

In 2013 the Council stepped up its efforts to bring further economic growth to the District.

After months of planning, and negotiation, the Council secured a new Marks & Spencer department store for Sevenoaks town. Construction began on the 2,700 square metre retail development in May, which is set to open its doors to customers in the summer of 2014. The store is expected to attract new shoppers to Sevenoaks benefitting existing traders while securing the town's retail future.

In partnership with the county and neighbouring councils, Sevenoaks District Council successfully bid for £5.5 million of interest free loan funding for local businesses. The money will be used to support fast growing companies to safeguard or create 1,200 jobs in the area.

Other initiatives included launching a free e-mail newsletter for businesses, using planning policies to protect key office space from potential housing development and free car parking in the District's retail centres in the run-up to Christmas.

Building on the 2012 Paralympic Games legacy, the Council encouraged more people to take up cycling by installing 60 plus bike racks across the District and working with British Cycling to run a series of community cycle rides. It also secured £50,000 in funding to install an Adizone outdoor gym in West Kingsdown where the Paralympic cycling Games took place.

This year has seen significant change at the Council. After 10 years our Chief Executive retired and was succeeded by the Council's Finance Director. One of the first tasks undertaken by the new Chief Executive/s.151 Officer was to introduce a streamlined senior management structure creating financial savings for the Council.

The Council went under the microscope in December when it volunteered for a Peer Review by the Local Government Association (LGA). The review involved a number of officers and Councillors from other councils and together with sector experts, including the Department for Communities and Local Government's Finance Director, looking at how well it performs and testing its plans for the future.

Their feedback was extremely positive. The LGA team said they were impressed with the Council's financial management, culture, high levels of customer satisfaction and the pride staff take in their work, helping it achieve one of the best reputations in local government. They also praised the way the Council works with the community and partner organisations to deliver its vision to improve the quality of life in the District.

7. The Ethical Framework and Work of the Standards Committee

The New Standards Committee which was introduced on the 24th July 2012 comprises 7 Members in accordance with the political balance rules.

An Independent Person has a statutory role under the Localism Act 2011 and Mr John Linehan was appointed Independent Person and Mrs Elaine Jackson was appointed as the reserve Independent Person for the purposes of the Localism Act 2011 by a majority of the Council with immediate effect from the 23rd April 2013. The Independent Persons are not Members of the Standards Committee although they are given details of the Committee's meeting date in order that they may attend. The Independent Persons assist 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 committee are set out within Part 3 of the Constitution entitled "Standards Committee".

Examples of the Standards Committee's work during 2013 is as follows:

- Receive the Annual Monitoring Officer's Report
- Review of the New Standards Regime and making minor amendments
- Reviewing the need for a Dispensation in Relation to Setting the Council Tax or a Precept
- Standards Training
- Looking at Openness and transparency in relation to interests

7.1 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.

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.

In addition, the Department for Communities and Local Government have stated that where a Councillor receives a taxable allowance from any authority of which they are a member, the allowance would give rise to a disclosable pecuniary interest that should be entered on the registers of interests under "Employment, office, trade, profession or vacation. However, the question of whether a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest in an item of Council business related to another authority of which he is a member will depend on the nature of what is to be discussed.

The prohibitions on councillors participating in any discussion or vote on an item of Council business in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest ensures that Councillors cannot put their private financial interests before the public interest. However, where a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest but stand to make no personal financial gain by participating in a discussion or vote on Council business related to that interest, they can apply for a dispensation, under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011. The grounds for granting a dispensation will depend on the circumstances.

6.1 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. Chief Officers 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' Managers and Chief Officers.

All hospitality received and given should be appropriate, necessary and must, wherever possible, have the prior sanction of the relevant Chief Officer and must be recorded in the Hospitality book kept by the Chief Executive's Secretary. There is a Protocol on Corruption, Gifts and Hospitality contained within the Staff Code of Conduct.

6.2 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
- 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).

Appendix

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.

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 code 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

The current Standards Regime, set up under the Localism Act 2011, was implemented by this Council in July 2012.

Allegations of Member Misconduct received under this regime, up to December 2012, numbered 15. All of these related to Parish/Town Council Members (no complaints relating to District Councillors) and 11 of these complaints related to one Parish Council. None of these complaints went to formal investigation.

Three complaints have been received between January and December 2013:

	Subject Member	Complainant	Received	Assessed	Result
13/01	Parish/Town	Councillor	January 13	January 13	No Further Action
13/02	District	Member of the public	January 13	February 13	No Further Action

Appendix

13/03	Parish/Town	Councillors (4)	April/May 13	July 13	Informal Resolution, with the help of the Independent Person
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The last meeting of the Standards Committee, which took place on 24 January 2013, reviewed the procedures put in place in July 2012 in light of the complaints received in 2012. Some Initial Intake Criteria were strengthened to improve the process of receiving and considering such Complaints.

The first complaint in the table above would not have progressed beyond the Initial Intake Stage under these revised criteria, as it related to a disagreement within another organisation.

The second complaint in the table above was subject to a brief deferment as a complaint had been made to the police also. This came to nothing and, under the District Council Assessment, there was no evidence of a breach of the Code of Conduct.

The third complaint could have fallen within the relevant Council's Code; but it was not considered sufficiently serious to warrant an Investigation, and any investigation may not have served any useful purpose. The Independent Person offered to progress the matter to attempt Informal Resolution.

At the time of writing this report there are no outstanding complaints at any stage in the process.

The number of complaints has reduced considerably in 2013. There are no lessons to be picked up from operating the procedures this year requiring amendment to the Intake or Assessment Criteria; but it did prove very useful to have the Independent Person involved in the mediation/conciliation work.

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.

Sevenoaks District Council is part of the West Kent Equality Partnership which also includes Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

The Partnership sets out its aims and commitments for 2012-16 and reviews its progress against its aims and commitments.

8. Support to Councillors, 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 requirements of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

9. Statutory Meeting 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 15 May 2012 and 14th May 2013 the following were serviced:

Full Council (including 1 annual meeting)	Meetings	7
Cabinet		11
Performance and Governance Committee		5
Electoral Arrangement Committee		2
Environment Select Committee		5
Services Select Committee		5
Social Affairs Select Committee		4

Appendix

Modern Local Government Group	3
Development Control Committee	17
Standards Committee	1
Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board	4
Licensing Committee	5
Sevenoaks District Locality Board	4
Finance Advisory Group	5
Local Development Framework Advisory Group	3

Other meetings serviced include 6 Licensing Sub Committee hearings.

Annual Council on the 14th May 2013 saw the introduction of the new governance structure.

Between the 15th May 2013 and the 31st December the following committees under the new structure were serviced (in brackets the figure shows how many additional meetings have been scheduled for the remainder of the Municipal year):

Full Council Meetings (including 1 annual meeting)	3	(2)
Strategy & Performance Advisory Committee	3	(1)
Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee	2	(2)
Finance & Resources Advisory Committee	3	(1)
Housing & Community Safety Advisory Committee	2	(2)
Local Planning & Environmental Advisory Committee	3	(2)
Cabinet	5	(4)
Audit Committee	2	(2)
Licensing Committee	2	(2)
Licensing Sub Committee Hearings	7	(5)
Development Control Committee	11	(5)
Governance Committee	3	(2)
Standards Committee	0	(1)

Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board	2	(1)
Sevenoaks District Locality Board	1	
Sevenoaks District Strategic Board	1	(1)
Health Liaison Board	2	(2)

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 and Corporate 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 the 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 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 2013.

10.3 Scrutiny Function

The Council is required by Law to discharge certain scrutiny functions. These functions are an essential component of local democracy. A Scrutiny Committee is a powerful committee which principally holds the Executive to account for its decisions. Policy development used to take place within the Select Committees and this now takes place within the Cabinet Advisory Committees, this being part of the changes made by the Governance restructure.

10.4 Member Training and Development

The New Standards and Conduct Arrangements for Members were adopted by the Full Council on the 24th 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 27th September 2012 by Claire Lefort an Associate at Weightmans Solicitors and a recognised expert in the field of governance and was well attended by both District Councillors and Parish/Town Councillors.

Training for the Independent Person took place on the 4th December 2012.

During 2013 the following relevant training has been under taken by the Monitoring Officer and her staff:

March 2013 – training for the (then) Chairman of the Committee.

May 2013 – training for the newly appointed Independent Person and Deputy Independent Person

August 2013 – afternoon training for Members of the Committee

October 2013 – evening training for Members of the Committee

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 has worked well through out the year 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