

INDEPENDENT MEMBER MONITORING

Report of the County Solicitor

Recommendation: that the report be noted.

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1. The Standards Committee agreed previously that Independent Members should attend meetings of the Council, the Cabinet and Committees on an ad-hoc basis to observe and monitor compliance with the Council's ethical governance framework, in line with the agreed protocol.
2. Independent Members have, since the report to the previous meeting, attended the following meetings and their views/feedback are summarised at paragraphs 3 and 4 below.

| Meeting                 |                   | Independent Member/Observer |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Cabinet                 | 11 July 2012      | Mrs Saltmarsh               |
| Farms Estates Committee | 17 July 2012      | Mr Bull                     |
| Council                 | 26 July 2012      | Prof Forsythe               |
| Cabinet                 | 12 September 2102 | Mrs Saltmarsh               |
| Council                 | 4 October 2012    | Mrs Mayes                   |

3. The following table summarises feedback received from Members on a number of general issues common to all meetings

| Observations:                                                                     | <i>1 = Very Poor and 5 = Very Good</i> |   |   |    |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---|---|----|------|
|                                                                                   | 1                                      | 2 | 3 | 4  | 5    |
| Punctuality and Attendance of Members                                             |                                        |   |   | ✓  | ✓✓✓✓ |
| Appearance and presentation                                                       |                                        |   |   | ✓✓ | ✓✓✓  |
| Speeches: clear, relevant, understandable, audio levels, use of microphones etc., |                                        |   |   | ✓  | ✓✓   |
| Use of appropriate language                                                       |                                        |   |   | ✓✓ | ✓✓✓  |
| Members' Conduct & Behaviour                                                      |                                        |   |   | ✓✓ | ✓✓✓  |

|                                                    |  |  |  |   |      |
|----------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|---|------|
| Clear identification and declaration of interests  |  |  |  | ✓ | ✓✓✓  |
| Effective Chairmanship/conduct of meeting          |  |  |  | ✓ | ✓✓✓✓ |
| Adherence to Agenda                                |  |  |  | ✓ | ✓✓✓✓ |
| Listening and responding to advice (from Officers) |  |  |  | ✓ | ✓✓✓✓ |

4. While there were a number of other issues raised by Independent Members as part of their observations there were no reports of any specific actions or behaviours that might be felt to have resulted in a potential breach of the Code or warranted further action.
5. Conversely, a Member praised the application of improved systems put in place to ensure compliance with procedures, ensure the involvement of all relevant persons and avoid a recurrence of problems experienced at a previous meeting of the same Committee.
6. Specific observations by Independent Members were that:
  - skillful, firm Chairmanship assisted the conduct of the meeting;
  - Members demonstrated a clear understanding of and the impact of decisions upon the public and interested parties;
  - the audibility of speakers/acoustics, particularly in the Council Chamber, continues to be a problem *[The purchase of a replacement system is being explored]*
  - Members need to be careful not to give the impression or acting in such as way as to give the impression they may not be giving their fullest attention to debates and, similarly, they avoid participating in 'separate conversations' during debates which are not only discourteous to speakers but may reflect poorly on the conduct of the meeting, particularly when meetings are webcast.
7. It is acknowledged that seating arrangements for Independent Members may not always be conducive to their task and where possible this will be rectified.
8. This Report has no specific equality, sustainability, legal or public health implications that are not already covered by or subsumed within the detailed policies or practices referred to therein.

JAN SHADBOLT

**[Electoral Divisions: All]**

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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| <u>Background Paper</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>File Reference</u> |
|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Nil                     |             |                       |