

ETHICAL GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK MONITORING

Report of the County Solicitor

Recommendation: that the report be noted.

1. The Standards Committee agreed previously that the independent, co-opted, members of the Committee 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. Members have, since the report to the previous meeting, attended the following meetings and their views/feedback are summarised at paragraphs 3 to 6 below.

Meeting		Co-opted Member/Observer
Procedures	16 April 2013	Mrs Saltmarsh
Cabinet	10 July 2013	Mr Bull
Exeter HATOC	23 July 2013	Mrs Mayes
Development Management	18 September 2013	Mrs Mayes
Corporate Services Scrutiny	25 September 2013	Mrs Saltmarsh
County Council	3 October 2013	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			✓		n/a ✓✓✓
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, co-opted members as part of their observations, as set out below, there were no reports of any specific actions or behaviors that might be felt to have resulted in a potential breach of the Code or warranted further action.
6. Specific observations by the independent co- opted members were that:
- while not obligatory, welcoming those members of the public present at the meeting was a nice gesture and would acknowledge their interest and effort in attending;
 - good and effective Chairmanship demonstrated, Scrutiny meetings steered in appropriately robust and challenging manner;
 - Members acknowledged and took on board Officers advice;
 - excellent Chairmanship demonstrated when prompting a Member to declare a known interest - to protect the interests of both the Council and the individual member - acknowledging that in the vast majority of instances Members properly declared interests without being reminded;
 - there appeared, among some members, to be a lack of familiarity with the operation of the new sound system; the new live sound system and video feed in the Chamber was a great improvement in identify and hearing speakers;
 - any documentation relating to an urgent matter properly raised at a meeting should be circulated appropriately and as early and as effectively as possible prior to the meeting, in line with any statutory requirements;
 - Chairmen should, wherever possible, ensure balanced contributions to any debate and avoid calling members to speak in the same order on every item to avoid any impression of partisanship/bias; limited input, perhaps understandably, from newer members of the Council;
 - Members' name plates need to be readable;
 - in order to appear even handed, if Chairmen allow time limits for speeches to be exceeded on occasion then that exercise of discretion should be applied consistently;
 - some members appear to be using portable devices/texting or reading during (County Council) meetings thereby possibly creating an impression for those present or watching on the webcast that they may not be fully engaged or concentrating on the business at hand.
7. This Report has no specific equality, sustainability, legal or public health implications that have not already been assessed and appropriate safeguards and/or actions taken or included within the detailed policies or practices or requirements relating to the conduct of meetings, to safeguard the Council's position.

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>
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Nil