

believes that attainment of high ethical standards is an essential element of the work of any public body and the transparent robust application of those in public service is particularly important. This summary report shows not only how the Committee has undertaken those tasks during the previous 12 months but how it continues to contribute to and offer the necessary direction to shape the governance culture and ethos of the organisation.

The County Council's Standards Committee comprises eleven persons, four of whom are co-opted, with the other seven members being Councillors (but not Cabinet represent the membership of the County Council as a this Committee work together to promote the standards of behaviour and systems of governance and where complaints or problems rarely arise. The Committee is held automatically by the Chairman of the recognising the traditional impartiality of that role. The long recognised the added value brought by an its Standards Committee. More information about the terms of reference, also set out in the Council's seen on the Council's website at:

Standards Committee Members:

County Councillors:

Christine Channon (Chairman)

Caroline Chugg

Polly Colthorpe

Alan Connett

George Gribble

Roy Hill

Andrew Moulding

Co-opted Members:

Anne Mayes

Ruth Saltmarsh

Ray Hodgins

Vincent Sullivan

Sir Simon Day

Members) who whole. Members of importance of high to create a climate Chairmanship of this County Council County Council has independent voice on Committee and its Constitution, can be

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/councillor/committee/standards/>

The Committee met 3 times in 2015/16 and, in addition, co-opted Members attended a further 24 meetings of the Council, Cabinet or Committees to observe and monitor compliance with the Council's ethical governance framework. While a number of practical observations were made about speaking, use of microphones, identification, use of nameplates and punctuality, no specific actions or behaviours were observed which might have resulted in a breach of the code or might warrant further action

The Standards Committee acts as champion and guardian of the County Council's ethical standards and is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by elected members and co-opted members of the Council. Article 3 of the Council's Constitution makes it clear that any member of the public may complain to the Monitoring Officer about an alleged breach of the Members' Code of Conduct which is set out in Part 6 of the County Council's Constitution available on

the Council's website at: http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/your_council/decision_making/constitution.htm.

The Council has put in place arrangements for dealing with complaints against Members and deal with any allegations that Members may have breached the Code. The Council has also appointed 'Independent Persons' one of whom has to be consulted upon and their views taken into account before reaching a decision about any allegation. More information about the Council's processes, the Code of Conduct and the complaints process can be found on the County Council's website at:

http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/county_councillors/councillorcomplaints.htm

A total of 4 complaints were received under the Members Code of Conduct relating to alleged breaches of the code relating variously to a councillor being unable to represent the interests of constituents, a failure to respond to or misleading others, conduct at a meeting and engagement with constituents on a specific issue and a lack of transparency during a public consultation exercise.

Following an initial assessment of each complaint involving an Independent Person appointed by the Council, as appropriate, no further action was taken on any of the complaints on the basis that either there had been no material breach of the code that would warrant further investigation or the allegations would not constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct and could not therefore be investigated.

There were no cases where a formal investigation or formal hearing of the Committee was required.

One Dispensation to speak and vote at meetings was granted to a Member of the Council to allow him to speak and vote on any matter before the Council or Committee consequent upon his being an approved foster carer unless it related directly to any placement with his family

The Committee also monitors the operation of the Council's feedback and complaints processes and continues to receive reports on compliments, representations and complaints received under the revised corporate feedback system. While acknowledging there was always room for improvement, the highly satisfactory results of that monitoring were again commendable. While the general trend for the number of complaints appeared to be inexorably upwards, this was felt to be as much a reflection of general societal attitude and expectations

and the positive work being undertaken by the Council to encourage feedback from members of the public rather than an increase in wrongdoing or failure of performance.

The Committee was particularly gratified to see the number of compliments received across most service areas had increased and that no procedural issues had been raised by the Local Government Ombudsman following complaints made to her or of any question of probity by elected members or officers

Looking Ahead: While the work of the Committee is demand led, it will continue to monitor elected members performance at meetings of the Council, Cabinet and Committees and adherence to the Council's ethical governance framework; to monitor and receive reports on compliments, representations and complaints received under the corporate feedback system; to monitor and consider any feedback arising from complaints to the Ombudsman and any issues raised by her about complaints handling and to identify and support provision of regular training and refresher events for elected members of the Council (particularly on the importance of the Code of Conduct and high standards of ethics and probity). This will, it is felt, be especially important and relevant in what will be the last full year of the Council prior to the next quadrennial elections in May 2017. In that vein the Committee will also undertake its third ethical governance audit and self-assessment survey of County Councillors and Officers towards the end of the first year of office of the new Council – to gauge both the understanding of any newly elected Members and the effectiveness of Induction Training and Member Development provided after the 2017 elections.

In 2015/16 Member Training and Development sessions were held on:

*Rules of Debate at Council meetings
Motions and Amendments
Identification and speaking at meetings
Ethical Governance
Members' Interests & Conduct
Availability of Members' Briefing Material
Members' Allowances
Electronic Agenda
Safeguarding Issues*

Finally the Committee would wish to record its appreciation of the contribution of Alderman Ken Turner to the work of this Committee over a number of years. Alderman Turner had been a former Chairman of Devon County Council and a Member of this Committee. He sadly passed away in 2015 following a period of poor health.

The Agenda and minutes of this Committee together with any Officers' Reports considered at the meeting are published online on the Council's Website at <http://www.devon.gov.uk/cma.htm>

Prepared by Devon County Council's Monitoring Officer

Copies of this Report may be obtained from the Democratic Services & Scrutiny Secretariat at County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QD or by ringing 0845 155 1015 and is also available on the County Council's website at: <https://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/councillor/committee/standards/>