

REVISION TO THE MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT: SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE	
STANDARDS COMMITTEE 18TH APRIL 2013 COUNCIL 26TH JUNE 2013	CLASSIFICATION: OPEN
WARD(S) AFFECTED ALL	
Gifty Edila, Corporate Director, Legal, HR and Regulatory Services	

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report proposes a revision to the Members' Code of Conduct to update the seven principles of public life, which are included within Appendix A to the Code.
- 1.2 The Members' Code of Conduct is required by the Localism Act 2011 to have regard to the seven principles of public life: selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership.
- 1.3 The Committee on Standard in Public Life published a report in January 2013 '*Standards matter – a review of best practice in promoting good behaviour in public life*'. The report, although not making any significant changes to the seven principles of public life, has revised the descriptions of the principles to ensure that they are up to date.
- 1.4 This report recommends that the description of the seven principles of public life, included in the Members' Code of Conduct, be revised in line with the principles recommended by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Standards Committee is asked to consider the revised descriptions of the principles of public life, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report, and recommend that Council includes them in the Members' Code of Conduct.**
- 2.2 Council is asked to approve that the Members' Code of Conduct be revised to incorporate the amended principles of public life, as attached in Appendix 2 of the report.**

3. REASON FOR DECISION

- 3.1 This report proposes an amendment to the Members' Code of Conduct to ensure that the Code accords with best practice and to ensure that high ethical standards are maintained by Members and co-optees.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES

- 4.1 This report sets out the revision of the description of the seven principles of public life in the Members' Code of Conduct and therefore does not contain any potential financial implications. If the need for additional resources is subsequently identified this would need to be funded from within the existing budget for Governance Services.

5. COMMENTS OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, HR AND REGULATORY SERVICES

- 5.1 The Localism Act 2011 places a duty on the Council to ensure that the Members' Code of Conduct has regard to the seven principles of public life: selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership. The current principles are listed in Appendix A of the Code and detailed in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 5.2 The Committee on Standards in Public Life is an independent advisory body that monitors, reports and make recommendations on all issues relating to standards in public life.
- 5.3 The Council is not under any legal obligation to follow the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. It is recommended however, that the Council updates the description of the seven principles of public life, in accordance with those recommended by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, in order to ensure that Members and co-optees continue to uphold high ethical standards and to ensure that the Code of Conduct accords with best practice.

6. SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

- 6.1 The new descriptions of the seven principles of public life, as amended by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, are attached in Appendix 2 of this report, and are recommended for inclusion in the Members' Code of Conduct. Appendix 1 of this report contains the existing seven principles of public life which are currently incorporated into the Code of Conduct.
- 6.2 Information on the changes to the seven principles can be found within the Committee on Standards in Public Life's report '*Standards matter – a review of best practice in promoting good behaviour in public life*'. The changes are broadly as follows:-
- i) Selflessness – The new description is refined to state that Members should act solely in terms of public interest.
 - ii) Integrity – The new description clarifies that Members should avoid placing themselves under organisations that might try to influence them in their work, and adds that Members should not act or take decisions to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, family or friends.
 - iii) Objectivity – The description is expanded to state that Members should act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. The previous description only made reference to taking decisions on merit.
 - iv) Accountability – There is little change in the wording of the new description. It is still stated that Members are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to scrutiny.
 - v) Openness – The new description clarifies that decisions should be made in an open and transparent manner and states that information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so. The previous description made no reference to withholding information.
 - vi) Honesty – The new description has been widened to state that Members should be truthful.
 - vii) Leadership – The new description has been widened to state that Members should promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour when it occurs.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Current principles of public life

Appendix 2 – Proposed new principles of public life

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