

**18 September 2014**

## **10. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

### **(c) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE**

#### **Member conduct during meetings**

1. Two of the prime roles of this Committee are to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by County Councillors, and assist Members to observe the Code of Conduct and relevant protocols in place from time to time. It is open to the Committee to issue general guidance to Members as part of this role. Such guidance would help Members ensure their proper conduct, and allow the public to understand the expectations of Members.

2. In the light of discussion at the Committee on 30 April regarding proper member conduct in meetings, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services had prepared draft guidance in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee and the Chairman of the Members' Advisory Group, Mrs L C Hodgson.

3. The Committee discussed and approved the draft guidance in relation to conduct expected of Members during meetings, with some agreed amendments. A copy of the final guidance has been circulated to all members of Council and is attached as an Appendix.

#### **The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014**

4. The Secretary of State has issued the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 to enhance the transparency of local government. These will require councils to provide reasonable facilities (so far as is practicable) to those attending a meeting for the purpose of reporting on it. This will enable members of the public and press to report public meetings via social media, filming, recording or taking photographs.

5. The Government's guidance says council permission will not be required for such activities, but reporters should not disrupt the meeting (e.g. through excessive noise, or the use of flash photography). Standing Orders will need updating as the Regulations have now been brought into force. The Council supports democratic transparency, with many of its formal meetings having been webcast for a number of years, and reporters have been able to tweet

and blog as they wish. However, the Regulations allow members to be filmed by observers throughout the meeting, whether or not webcast. This underlines the need for good member conduct throughout meetings. The Committee has noted the (then) draft Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014.

**Mrs A T Hingley**  
**Chairman**

## **Supporting Information**

Appendix – Guidance note on conduct of members during meetings

## **Contact Points**

### **County Council Contact Points**

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### **Specific Contact Points for this Report**

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee held on 23 July 2014