



**Meeting: Standards Committee**

**Date: 20 November 2013**

**Wards Affected: All**

**Report Title: Member Code of Conduct and Terms of Reference Revision: The Principles of Public Life**

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## **1. Purpose and Introduction**

- 1.1 To propose changes to the Member Code of Conduct following the recent revision of the seven principles of public life by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

## **2. Proposed Decision**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the council replaces the seven principles on public life that are presently contained within the Council's Member Code of Conduct with the revised principles set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in their report: Standards Matter: A Review of Best Practice in Promoting Good Behaviour in Public Life .
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## **Supporting Information**

### **4. Position**

- 4.1 The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established in 1994 to act as an independent advisory body to the government. It monitors, reports and makes recommendations on all issues relating to standards in public life, including local government.
- 4.2 The fourteenth report of the committee (Standards Matter: A Review of Best Practice in Promoting Good Behaviour in Public Life) was released on 17 January 2013 and included changes to the seven principles of public life, often known as the Nolan Principles.
- 4.3 The principles were proposed as part of the first report of the committee under the chairmanship of Lord Nolan in 1995 as a consequence of general concerns regarding standards of behaviour in public life.

4.4 The changes made to the seven principles of public life do not alter the broad topics already incorporated within the Member Code of Conduct (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership). Rather, the changes relate to a shift in definitions, as laid out in paragraph 5.2.

## 5. The Proposed Changes

5.1 The seven principles on public life are reproduced as a whole within the Council's Member Code of Conduct. As the expression of the principles has now changed, it is recommended that members consider incorporating the revisions within the Members Code of Conduct.

5.2 For members' information a side-by-side comparison of the previous and revised principles is shown below. Members should particularly note the changes made with regard to the explanations of honesty and integrity, and the potential implications for future consideration of any future complaints.

Current Principles	Revised Principles
<p><b>Selflessness</b>            Holders of public office should act solely in terms of public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.</p>	<p><b>Selflessness</b>            Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.</p>
<p><b>Integrity</b>            Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.</p>	<p><b>Integrity</b>            Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.</p>
<p><b>Objectivity</b>            In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.</p>	<p><b>Objectivity</b>            Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.</p>

<p><b>Accountability</b> Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.</p>	<p><b>Accountability</b> Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.</p>
<p><b>Openness</b> Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all their decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.</p>	<p><b>Openness</b> Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.</p>
<p><b>Honesty</b> Holders of public office have a duty to declare any public interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.</p>	<p><b>Honesty</b> Holders of public office should be truthful.</p>
<p><b>Leadership</b> Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.</p>	<p><b>Leadership</b> Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.</p>

- 5.3 Members should note that the removal of wording from the revised principles, e.g. ‘They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.’ under selflessness, is not tacit approval for behaviour this kind. Rather, in this case, the additional wording appears to have been removed for the purposes of concision. Some broad indications as to the overall purpose of the changes is made within the committee’s report, although specific rationales for each revision are not provided.

## 6. Equal Opportunities

- 6.1 Not applicable

## 7. Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

7.1 Not applicable

**8. Consultation**

8.1 Not applicable

**9. Risks**

9.1 None