

Cheshire East Council

Standards Committee



www.cheshireeast.gov.uk



Foreword from the Council Leader

Cheshire East
Council formally
came into being

on 1 April 2009 and I am pleased and honoured to hold office as its first leader. Everyone who has been elected to the new Council and elected or appointed to the Town and Parish Councils within Cheshire East is committed to working to the highest standards of behaviour at all times. We will be upholding, and building on the excellent record of the predecessor local authorities who came together to form Cheshire East.

Local Government must go about its business honourably and be seen to do so, in order that the public can retain confidence in the conduct and integrity of their elected representatives. The Standards Committee ensures compliance with the Council's Code of Conduct and investigates any breach of the code, and in any more serious cases, conduct a full hearing with appropriate sanctions.

The purpose of this leaflet is to offer guidance and information to the public we serve, and to Councillors throughout the Authority, coupled with an assurance that all valid complaints or referrals will receive close and responsible attention.

Wesley Fitzgerald

The purpose and role of the Standards Committee

Confidence in local democracy is a cornerstone of our way of life. It can only be achieved when elected and co-opted Councillors (Unitary/Town/Parish) are seen to live up to the very highest standards the public has the right to expect from them. The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting high ethical standards and investigating allegations that Councillors behaviour may have fallen short of the required standards. Its work is important to everyone who cares about the maintenance of an open and honest system of local governance.

The Committee meets on a regular basis and members of the public are welcome to attend. A short period of ten minutes is available at the start of the meeting to allow members of the public to speak on matters relevant to the work of the committee. It is helpful if at least one day's notice is given of the question or statement.

Makeup of the Standards Committee

In contrast with other Committees of Cheshire East Council, the Standards Committee has no less than five independent non-political members who are appointed, and selected on merit and experience and these include the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee. This ensures the Committee retains independence and free from political influence. The remaining members of the Standards Committee are drawn widely from across the spectrum of the Council and community and comprise eight elected members who reflect the political constitution of the Council as a whole along with three Town/Parish Councillors.

Code of conduct

Cheshire East Council has adopted a Code of Conduct that sets out rules governing the behaviour of its members. All elected and co-opted members of the local authority including Town and Parish Councillors are covered by the Code.

The Code of Conduct demands high standards of individual behaviour and requires, for example, that members do not abuse their position or misuse their Authorities' resources. In addition, there are rules governing disclosure of interest and withdrawal from meetings, furthermore, Councillors are also required to record their financial and other interests.

Making a complaint

If you are unhappy with the way a Councillor has behaved you may wish, before lodging a formal complaint in writing, to discuss the issue in confidence with the Monitoring Officer or his representative. The Standards Committee wants to ensure that complaints are dealt with as speedily and efficiently as possible. By discussing your complaint a simple and speedy solution may be found.

If you do decide to proceed with a formal written complaint about a Member of Cheshire East Council or a member of a Town or Parish Council, you may do this by using the complaint form available from the Monitoring Officer, or download it from the Council's Website. You may wish to refer to the Code of Conduct available from the Standards Board for England or from the Monitoring Officer.

Continued overleaf

If you do make a written complaint you will be told in writing what will happen to your complaint. If the authority decides that the Standards Committee will deal with the complaint, a meeting of three of the Committee, chaired by one of the Independent Members will decide what happens next. This meeting will be called within 20 days of receiving your complaint.

We exist to help ensure that you have complete confidence in the integrity of your local Councillors. If you do have a complaint we will do all we can to ensure that it is dealt with fairly and effectively.

Making contact

Information about the Standards Committee including details of meetings, membership, and the work of the Committee is available from info@cheshireeast.gov.uk or phone **01270 529952**

If you wish to make a complaint please contact the Council's Monitoring Officer at the address below, phone **01270 686637** or e-mail complaints@cheshireeast.gov.uk

The Standards Board for England can provide you with useful information about both the Code of Conduct and the work of Standards Committees as well as the Board itself. Contact:

The Standards Board for England
Fourth Floor
Griffin House
40 Lever Street
Manchester M1 1BB

Tel: **0161 817 5300**
Fax: **0161 817 5499**
Minicom: **0161 817 5499**
e-mail: enquiries@standardsboard.gov.uk

Cheshire East Council
Westfields
Middlewich Road
Sandbach CW1 1HZ

www.cheshireeast.gov.uk