

Open letter from the Chair of Standards Committee

I am fully aware that terms such as 'corporate governance', 'standards' and 'ethical frameworks', do not exactly set pulses racing. However, as is often the case in life, discreet, and purposeful work underpins many of the more visible activities we are familiar with.

Local government is no different. For each new project, perhaps a leisure centre, school or social care facility dozens of people (council staff, community representatives and elected councillors) have worked hard to deliver an initiative that aims to be the right solution to a particular problem or opportunity at any given time within a certain budget.

What is crucial is ensuring that decisions are made transparently, based on sound judgement and free from personal bias. Interestingly, evidence from organisations such as the Audit Commission shows that good corporate governance and high council performance are directly related. That is why the issue of 'governance', 'standards' and 'ethics' is so important.

Consequently, much of what your Standards Committee does is to ensure that all aspects of Southwark's operations are run within a framework of high ethical standards. It is for that reason that five of the committee members are totally independent i.e. they are not elected councillors. As part of the work we:

- Monitor our systems and processes against nationally recommended criteria, and support external audits
- Oversee training for councillors on the national Code of Conduct for elected members
- Assess, review and adjudicate on complaints against councillors*
- Encourage all members to achieve high ethical standards
- Communicate to Southwark residents the role of the Standards Committee and we invite members of the public to become involved in its work

* if a complaint is made against a councillor the chair of all assessment and review meetings is always an independent member.

There is, of course, much more than this, but I hope this synopsis and the web pages are helpful to you in understanding the essence of what we do, why we do it, and how you can find out more or become involved.



Mark L Roelofsen
Independent Chair, Southwark Standards Committee
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Within this area of the website you should find information on aspects of governance including:

- The Code of Conduct for elected councillors
- How to complain if you think a councillor has breached the Code of Conduct
- The names of the people sitting on the Standards Committee, and their political affiliations, if any
- Dates of future meetings, and minutes of past meetings
- A link to the Standards for England
- How to access the members' declarations of interests
- The annual governance statement
- How to apply to serve on the Standards Committee as an Independent member

If you would like to be informed of any vacancies that arise for Independent members get in touch with the team supporting our work on constitutional.team@southwark.gov.uk