

Ethical Audit 2007 – Summary of Findings

Issue Identified
Codes and Protocols
A high proportion of people are unaware of the Members' Code of Conduct (58%).
A significant proportion of people (43%) don't know that the Council has adopted the Code of Conduct for officers, and 1% are confident that the Council has not. 7% of people think they have not agreed to abide by the Officer Code, and 46% did not know.
87% of people don't know how to report a potential breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.
Staff within Customer Services had poor knowledge of these processes.
58% of people believe that the Council's approach to high ethical standards is encouraging appropriate behaviour across the Council, and only 7% disagree.
42% of people believe that the Council's approach to high ethical standards is building public confidence in local democracy, 10% disagree.
1% said they would do nothing about a potential breach of the Members' Code of Conduct and 46% were unsure whether they would do nothing.
30% of officers said they would approach their trade union representative for advice if they had concerns about the behaviour of a Councillor, and 79% would approach their line manager.
There is uncertainty about who to contact regarding concerns about the officer code of conduct. However 70% of people would speak to their line manager, 43% would contact Human Resources, and 31% would speak to their trade union representative.
Register of Interests
30% of people are unclear what a conflict of interest is.
66% of officers are aware that there is a register of interests kept for Members to record interests and gifts and hospitality, less than 1% disagree, and the remaining 34% don't know.
34% of officers don't know there is a register of interests for officers, and 1% are sure there is not.
37% of officers don't know there is register of gifts for officers, and 1% are sure there is not.
Standards Committee
57% of people do not know there is a Standards Committee within the Council, and 1% are sure there is not.
74% of people don't know whether the work of the Standards Committee adds value to the Council, and 1% think that it does not.

Whistle blowing Policy
There is low awareness of the whistle blowing policy and how to use it. There is also an element of dissatisfaction with the policy, for example, officers feeling victimised for having used it.
Training on Legislation
The results show that there is a lack of consistency regarding which officers have been trained on specific legislation, however this may be due to the different needs of the departments and officers.
Relationship between Members and Officers
The overall results show that 4% of respondents believe Councillors are always a focus for positive change, 18% think they usually are, 41% sometimes, 7% rarely, 2% never and 29% don't know.
The overall results show that 2% of respondents believe that Councillors always stay out of operational issues, 14% say they usually do, 32% say they sometimes do, 9% say they rarely do, and 3% say they never do. The remaining 39% don't know whether Councillors interfere in operational issues or not.
The overall results show that 3% of respondents believe that Councillors always listen to the advice of officers, 19% think they usually listen, 28% say sometimes, 8% say rarely, less than one per cent say never, and the remaining 42% don't know.
The overall results show that 3% of respondents believe that Councillors always avoid involving officers inappropriately in party political issues. 13% say they usually do, 10% sometimes, 7% rarely, 4% say never, and the remaining 63% don't know.
The overall results show that 8% of respondents believe Councillors always show respect to officers, 37% think they usually do, 5% sometimes, less than 1% rarely or never and the remaining 28% don't know
The overall results show that only 7% of respondents believe that Councillors always show respect to other Councillors, 24% think they usually do, 17% sometimes, 3% rarely and the remaining 49% don't know.
The overall results show that 14% of respondents believe that Councillors always show respect to people who use Council services, 33% believe they usually do, 13% sometimes, 2% rarely and less than one per cent say never. The remaining 39% don't know.
The overall results show that 11% of respondents believe that Councillors always treat Council service users fairly and do not discriminate, 27% think they usually do, nine per cent say sometimes, one per cent believe they rarely do, and the remaining 52% don't know. In addition, one respondent replied that Councillors never treat Council service users fairly.
The overall results show that 12% of respondents believe that Councillor always treat officers fairly and do not discriminate unlawfully, 24% say that they usually do, 9% sometimes, 2% rarely and the remaining 52% don't know.
The overall results show that 10% of respondents believe that Councillors always treat other Councillors fairly and don't discriminate unlawfully, 25% think they usually do, 9% say sometimes, and the remaining 55% don't know.

<p>The overall results show that only 8% of respondents believe that Councillors perform their duties with honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity, 27% believe they usually do, 16% say they sometimes do, 3% rarely, 1% never, and 45% don't know. Of particular concern is that fact that respondents seem more sure about this question than the preceding ones, and the answers are more negative.</p>
<p>Only 8% of respondents feel that Councillor always use Council funds and property responsibly, 26% say they usually do, 14% say sometimes, three per cent rarely, one per cent never, and the remaining 48% don't know.</p>
<p>The overall results show that 29% of respondents believe that officers 'always' show respect to Councillors, 37% believe they 'usually' do and 5% think they 'sometimes' do. Less than 1% think that officers 'rarely' or 'never' show respect to Councillors, and the remaining 28% don't know.</p>
<p>The overall results show that 29% of respondents believe that officers always treat Council service users fairly and do not discriminate unlawfully. 38% of respondents believe they usually do, and 4% say they sometimes do. Only 28% don't know.</p>
<p>The overall results show that 30% of respondents believe that officers treat all Councillors fairly, 33% believe they usually do, 4% sometimes, and 32% don't know.</p>
<p>Communication</p>
<p>67% of officers believe that the importance of high standards of behaviour amongst officers is communicated widely, 13% say it is not, and 20% don't know.</p>
<p>Only 29% of officers believe that communication between Members and officers is always or usually open, 18% say sometimes, 1% rarely, 1% never and 47% don't know.</p> <p>30% of officers believe that communication between Members and officers is always or usually constructive, 22% say sometimes, 2% rarely, 1% never and 47% don't know.</p>
<p>Public Access to Information</p>
<p>18% of officers agree that the public can easily access the Members' Code of Conduct, 4% disagree and 78% don't know.</p> <p>15% of officers agree that the public can easily access the Members' register of interests, 5% disagree and 81% don't know.</p> <p>29% of officers agree that the public can easily access documents relating to Committee meetings, 7% disagree and 65% don't know.</p>
<p>Decision making and governance</p>
<p>23% of officers agree that Councillor and officers trust each other, 15% of officers think that Councillors and officers do not trust each other, and 62% don't know.</p>
<p>32% agree and 3% disagree that Councillors can carry out their duties without fear of being bullied, intimidated or harassed, and 66% don't know.</p>
<p>23% disagree that officers can carry out their duties without fear of being bullied, intimidated or harassed, and 48% don't know.</p>
<p>49% of officers agree that decision making is done properly by officers, 8% disagree and 43% don't know.</p>
<p>63% of officers believe that officers are accountable for their decisions, 7% disagree and 30% don't know.</p>

<p>28% of officers agree there is easy access to information on whom has taken particular decisions at the Council, for example through Committee minutes and delegated decision forms, 9% disagree and 64% don't know.</p>
<p>33% of officers agree that Councillors are able to challenge decisions without fear of reprisal, 2% disagree, and 65% don't know. However only 17% agree that officers are able to challenge Councillors' decisions without fear of reprisal and 18% disagreed.</p>
<p>36% of officers agree that the public are able to challenge decisions without fear of reprisal, 6% disagree and 58% don't know.</p>
<p>Making Complaints</p>
<p>39% of officers think that the complaints system in the Council is clear, 8% disagree and 52% don't know.</p>
<p>56% agree that Councillors take complaints from the public seriously, 6% disagree and 38% don't know.</p> <p>31% of officers agree that Councillors respond positively to external criticism about the Council, 11% disagree and 58% don't know.</p>
<p>11% of officers feel that they are unable to refer a complaint about a Councillor's behaviour without fear of reprisal, and 65% don't know.</p>
<p>Council's Goals</p>
<p>38% of officers agree that Councillors and officers work well together to achieve the Council's common goals, 10% disagree and 52% don't know.</p> <p>51% of officers agree that the Council works well with voluntary and community groups to achieve the areas common goals, 4% disagree and 46% don't know.</p>