

**EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS
COMMITTEE HELD ON 3RD FEBRUARY 2015**

20. Question and Answer Session - Leader of the Council and Chief Executive

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, and Gavin Jones, Chief Executive, were in attendance to report to the Committee on matters relating to the Council's ethical governance framework and issues of probity and to discuss with members the key priorities for ensuring that high ethical standards continue to be promoted and maintained within the Council.

The Leader referred to specific matters raised during the course of the previous question and answer session, as recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2014, and confirmed that these had been addressed, where necessary, via amendments to the Council's Constitution and/or its Standards arrangements. It was his view that Council's new ethical framework had become firmly embedded in the organisation, since its introduction from July 2012, and was proving very effective.

The Chief Executive commented that the Council continued to have to contend with the implications of the combined pressures of continuing austerity and reduced financial resources, perhaps, unfortunately, for some time to come. However, he was pleased to report that, whilst the pressure on the organisation continued, and there existed the potential for organisational and relationship stress as a consequence of that pressure, there had been few, if any, significant manifestations of problems in terms of strained member/officer relationships and/or inappropriate behaviours. He advised that, since the last question and answer session with the Standards Committee, the Monitoring Officer had joined Corporate Board, and that his expertise was extremely valuable to the operation of that senior officer forum, particularly in the context of matters of ethical governance and corporate behaviours.

The Chief Executive commented on the Council's Organisational strategy, particularly in relation to expected officer behaviours and values, as articulated through the "Stronger Together" organisational vision and feeding through the appraisal and performance management systems. He was pleased with how this strategy had been adopted across the Corporate Council whilst recognising that, as with any organisational strategy, there remained room for improvement. Overall, he felt the Council had established a strong set of organisational values against which it might be held to account and that the strategy was working very well.

Following their opening remarks, the Leader and Chief Executive responded to members' questions on the following issues:

- The continuing demand on services and pressure on staff resources and the recognition and management of stress in the workplace environment.
- The success of the Council's Localities function in working alongside Ward Members to engage with local people and communities to resolve community based problems and influence corporate policies.

- The necessary contraction of service provision in response to on-going resource pressures and the management of community and individual service expectations.

Resolved – That Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, and the Chief Executive be thanked for attending the meeting and for their full and open responses to members questions on matters relating to the Council's ethical governance framework and issues of probity.