

Surrey Police Authority

Standards Committee

Annual Report



**SURREY
POLICE
AUTHORITY**

May 2008 – May 2009

Welcome

Welcome to the Surrey Police Authority Standards Committee Annual Report for the municipal year May 2008 to May 2009. This report gives an introduction to the Committee, its role and responsibilities and current membership and provides an overview of the work of the Committee over the last municipal year.

Standards Committee Members

The Standards Committee of Surrey Police Authority, established under the Local Government Act 2000, comprises six Members. Three are Independent Members (appointed solely to the Standards Committee) and three are full Members of the Police Authority – either County Councillors, Independent or (until October 2008) Magistrate Members. During 2008/09 municipal year, the Members have been:

Photos will be inserted here in the final version

Adrian Padfield
Chairman and
Independent Member

Gary Crouch
Independent Member

Brian Smith
Vice Chairman and
Independent Member

Alan Peirce
Authority Councillor
(until September 2008)

Jean Smith
Authority Councillor
(from September 2008)

Graham Wallage
Authority Magistrate
(until October 2008)

Lynn Hawkins JP
Authority Independent
(from October 2008)

Heather Kerswell
Authority Independent

Standards Committee's Role

The Committee's primary roles are to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members of the Authority, to assist them in observing the Authority's Code of Conduct and to assess, review and investigate any allegations of misconduct on the part of Members.

The Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee are as follows:

1. To maintain high standards of conduct by Members by:
 - advising the Authority on the adoption or revision of its Code of Conduct and to monitor its operation
 - assisting members in observing the Code of Conduct including arrangements for training on matters relating to the Code of Conduct
 - granting dispensations to members with prejudicial interests
 - granting exemptions for politically restricted posts
 - assessing and reviewing complaints about Members, including overseeing any investigation as required
 - conducting determinations' hearings
 - advising the Authority on training needs it has identified for Members
 - being the final arbiter of any Member's personal objectives referred to the Committee by either the Chairman or a Member
 - The Independent Members of the Standards Committee review the Scheme of Allowances and bring recommendations to the Authority for approval
 - The Authority Members of the Standards Committee review the Scheme of Allowances for independent members of the Standards Committee and bring recommendations to the Authority for approval.
 - In accordance with any statutory requirements, monitoring and advising the Authority on compliance with the requirements for registration of interests and registers of gifts and hospitality.
 - advising the Authority of liaison arrangements with the Standards Board for England

2. To review the effectiveness of the Police Authority by:
 - Assisting the Police Authority to develop and improve through the Self-Assessment process
 - Reviewing Standing Orders of the Police Authority and make any recommendations for change to the Authority
 - Advising the Authority on any protocols which need to be developed in order for the Authority's business to be carried out appropriately
 - Considering audit and inspection reports relevant to the Police Authority and oversee implementation of any agreed recommendations
 - Ensuring that the Authority complies with the requirements of Freedom of Information and Data Protection
3. To assist in the implementation of the Authority's Equality Schemes.

Key issues addressed by the Standards Committee in 2008/09

The Committee has met four times in the last municipal year. Below are some of the issues that have been covered:

Local Investigations

A key new role for the Standards Committee this year has been its responsibility to oversee 'local investigations' into allegations of misconduct against Authority Members. Following the issue of amended guidance from the Standards Board, the Committee has helped to develop a protocol which sets out detailed procedures for the handling of allegations. Arrangements are now in place to convene sub-committees for the assessment; review; and consideration and hearing stages of the process. Members of the Committee have also attended relevant training in preparation for any complaints that may arise.

Code of Conduct for Members

In December 2008, the Committee considered, as part of a series of consultations from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), a number of questions on the Code of Conduct for local authority members and employees, which also covers Police Authority Members. The Committee focused on key

areas which included the possible exclusion of Members following a criminal conviction. The Committee's view that the public would rightly expect a higher level of behaviour from Police Authority Members than that set out in the proposed code was reflected in its response. Concerns around the introduction of a mandatory code for local government employees were also raised. The revised Code will be reviewed and implemented when it is published in the coming year.

In addition, the Committee has looked into how Members' compliance with the Code of Conduct is monitored and has satisfied itself that sufficient measures are in place to assess this.

Police Authority Inspections

This year will see the first round of Police Authority inspections, to be undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Audit Commission. The Committee has been overseeing the implementation of the Authority's self assessment, undertaken in preparation for the inspections, since June 2007. Work carried out as a result of the assessment has included sign-up to the Member Development Charter; training sessions on risk management and local resolution; and the development of a vision, purpose and values for the Authority. The Committee will continue to ensure the Authority is sufficiently prepared as we approach our likely inspection date in 2010.

Code of Corporate Governance

The Committee has assisted with the development of a revised Code of Corporate Governance for the Authority, which was approved in March 2009. This important document sets out how the Authority provides good governance for the policing of Surrey – in other words, the systems, processes, culture and values by which Surrey Police Authority is directed and by which it controls its work. The Committee has ensured that the Code is aligned with recent guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Administration (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Government Chief Executives (SOLACE).

Standards Board for England Guidance on Standards Committees

The Committee has reviewed the guidance issued by the Standards Board for England on the role and composition of Standards Committees. This necessitated some small amendments to the Committee's terms of reference, but overall the Committee was found to be compliant.

Annual Assembly of Standards Committees

A number of issues arising at the annual assembly have been progressed by the Committee this year. These include the importance of improving public awareness of, and confidence in, Standards Committees. Subsequently, an article on the role of the Committee has been published on the Authority's website and initial plans have been discussed for hosting a regional seminar for Police Authority Standards Committees in the south east to share experiences and best practice.

Member Development Charter

In June 2008, the Authority formally signed up to achieving the South East Employers' Member Development Charter. Working towards the Charter will allow us to look at the processes for Member Development already in place - such as the Personal Development Review (PDR), Member objectives, induction and training - and consider how these can be improved, as well as identifying what additional processes we might put in place. The Committee has reviewed the initial self assessment document and action plan and a number of pieces of work have been scheduled into its work plan over the coming year as the Authority prepares for assessment in late 2009 or early 2010.

The Committee continues to receive regular updates on issues relating to Member training and development, including routine feedback from new Members following their induction to the Authority and input into the training plan on an annual basis.

Raising the Profile of the Committee and Relations with the Authority

It is recognised that Surrey's Standards Committee has a broader remit of involvement with the Authority's business than most of its counter-parts in other police authorities. The Committee is careful to strike a balance between useful scrutiny of the Authority, promoting of high standards and supporting the Authority;

and maintaining its independence and impartiality. The Committee has also recognised this year the importance of raising its profile with the Authority, the Force and the wider public, particularly given its more prominent role in dealing with complaints about Member conduct. Independent members of the Authority have continued to attend Authority meetings and have made individual contributions to workshop sessions on particular subjects. The Chairman of the Committee has met informally with the Chairman of the Authority to discuss standards issues. The Committee will keep its role under review to ensure it continues to be both challenging and supportive.

Recruitment of Independent Members

The composition of Police Authority's membership changed in October 2008, with the separate category of Magistrate Member being subsumed into the independent Member category. As such, the Authority had to fill three vacancies for independent Members. For the first time, independent Standards Committee Members were formally appointed to the selection panel. They were able to be sufficiently independent to provide impartiality to the recruitment process whilst still having knowledge of the Authority and its business. The Committee as a whole reviewed the process of recruitment once complete, which was deemed fair and effective.

Review of Member Induction

The Committee has reviewed the Authority's Member Induction arrangements this year to ensure they remain fit for purpose. This is a particularly important piece of work given the arrival of at least seven new County Councillors to the Authority in the forthcoming municipal year.

Members' Allowances

This year, the Remuneration Panel has undertaken a review of the Scheme of Allowances, taking on board the recommendations in the Association of Police Authority's (APA) report into Members' Allowances. The Committee's recommendations were presented to the Authority at its meeting in March 2009. Given the current economic climate, Members chose not to take the proposed

increase in allowances in line with the Consumer Price Index, as proposed by the Committee, and the existing scheme was kept in place, unchanged, for 2009/10.

Member Attendance

The Committee has continued to review Member attendance at each of its meetings, looking into a breakdown of figures for all public meetings, workshops and committee and panel meetings. Where necessary, the Chairman of the Committee has progressed areas of concern with the Authority's Chairman.

Internal Audit Report Recommendations - Corporate Governance and Performance management

As part of its role to consider audit and inspection reports relevant to the Authority, the Committee has reviewed the recommendations made by internal auditors following inspections of Corporate Governance and Performance Management. Several recommendations relating to Member attendance were raised in the report and a subsequent paper debating the merits of setting targets for attendance was brought to the Committee. In addition, the Committee recommended that a workshop be held to inform and educate Members of the benefits of Personal Development Reviews (PDRs). This was held in March 2009 and PDRs are being progressed as part of the Authority's wider work on the Member Development Charter.

Review of the Press and Publicity Policy

The Authority's Press and Public Policy sets out expectations of Members when speaking about Authority business. This year, the Committee has reviewed the policy to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and finds the right balance between Members' right to express their views and the Authority's need to manage its reputation. The Committee has approved a simplified version of the policy.

Retention Policy and Publication Scheme

In its capacity to ensure compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Data Protection Act (1998), the Committee has approved a revised procedure for the retention and disposal of records held by the Authority. The Authority's Publication Scheme, which sets out the information that is routinely available to

the public under the Freedom of Information Act, has been reviewed in light of guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office and the APA.

Related Party Disclosures and Gifts and Hospitality

The Committee has ensured the Authority fulfils its disclosure requirements for the financial year by publishing details of transactions between Members or Chief Officers of the Authority, and Surrey Police and Surrey Police Authority. The Committee was able to confirm that all necessary forms were received. The Gifts and Hospitality Annual Report, setting out the number and type of gifts received by Members over the course of the year, is considered by the Committee annually and published on the Authority's website.

Work plan for 2009/10

The Committee considers its work plan at each meeting and items are added or amended as business dictates. The issues the Committee is planning to consider during the next municipal year include:

Member Development Charter

As the Authority approaches its assessment date for the Member Development Charter in late 2009 or early 2010, the Committee will continue to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan. Activities assigned to the Committee in the coming months include the development and implementation of a training plan for the Authority and ensuring that new Member induction is carried out effectively.

Member Training and Development

The Committee will be agreeing a training plan for the Authority and ensuring that the plan includes specific details of the aims and objectives of each piece of training and how these link with the Authority's corporate aims. The Committee is also overseeing the introduction of an 'integrated member development process' which is likely to include elements of self assessment, 360 degree appraisal, review and objective-setting for Members. A training log, which shows all development opportunities offered to, and taken up by Members, is being monitored by the Committee. With at least seven new Members joining the

Authority this year, oversight of training and development will be a key role for the Committee.

Research on Effective Standards Committees

The Committee has been chosen to take part in a research project, being undertaken on behalf of the Standards Board for England, into examples of notable practice in Standards Committees. The Committee will be visited by researchers and interviewed on their role and remit as part of the project.

Review of Local Investigations Protocol

A year on from the adoption of the local investigations protocol, the Committee will undertake a review to ensure, if needs be, that the process works in practice.

Preparation for Police Authority Inspections and Authority Self Assessment

As the Authority approaches its first inspection in 2010, the Committee has agreed to be involved in a renewal of the Authority's Self Assessment exercise, having provided an oversight and monitoring role in the first assessment carried out in 2007. The Standards Committee will oversee the revised Self Assessment process including the publication of final scores and an action plan. The Committee will also help ensure that plans are in place to properly train and brief Members prior to the arrival of the inspection team.

Working with Other Standards Committees

The Committee will be hosting a seminar with other Standards Committees from South East Police Authorities in the coming year. Initial discussions with other areas have indicated that this would be a welcome opportunity to share best practice, experiences of the new local investigations process and to understand how other authorities' committees work in practice. The Committee has also agreed to a reciprocal arrangement with neighbouring authorities for the local investigations process and will, in the year ahead, use outside members for the review stage of any investigation.

Review of Publication Scheme

The publication scheme is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant.

Register of Members Interests, Related Party Disclosures and Gifts and Hospitality

The Committee will make sure that the Authority fulfils its obligations in respect of the above.

Member Attendance

Regular reports on Member attendance will be brought to the Committee and the Chairman will look into any issues of concern should they arise.

Members Allowances

The Remuneration Panel will undertake a review of the Scheme of Members Allowances for 2010/11 to ensure it is fair and up to date.

Surrey Police Authority's Website

You can find out more about Surrey Police Authority and its Standards Committee on the Authority's website – www.surreypa.police.uk. Here you will find a page dedicated to the role of the Committee as well as key documents including the Authority's Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and previous Committee Annual Reports.