

Ethical Governance: Introduction

"Ethical governance is concerned about the standards of conduct of all holders of public office, including arrangements in relation to financial and commercial activities". (Hansard 1994).

There is an increased emphasis on the need for the highest standards of conduct in public life. The findings of Nolan and Graham Committees, the Local Government Act 2000, the introduction of Standards for England (formerly the Standards Board for England), and the inclusion of an ethics component in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment/ Comprehensive Area Assessment are all factors in the current weight being given to the need for strong ethical governance in the public service.

High ethical standards are a cornerstone of good governance. Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation has sought to promote confidence in local democracy by introducing:

- a statutory Code of Conduct with which all Members must comply
- a Standards Committee in each relevant authority to take the lead responsibility for ethics, to promote high standards of ethical governance and, where appropriate, to locally investigate and determine allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct.
- procedures for the local investigation and adjudication of breaches of the Code of Conduct.

Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority believes that the maintenance of high ethical standards is also crucial to developing its community leadership role, to further improving its service to the community and to successfully managing its increasingly complex local partnerships.

This Handbook sets out the Authority's arrangements for its ethical governance; however, it is recognised that one of the common aspects of governance failures is not the absence of these frameworks and controls but the absence of appropriate behaviours and values amongst Members and officers. The Authority will therefore continually audit not only its compliance with statutory requirements, but also its individual and corporate behaviour, culture and values.

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