

A meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** will be held in **ROOM CVSO1A, CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST. MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, CAMBS, PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2012** at **4:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th September 2012.

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary or other interests in relation to any Agenda Item – see Notes below.

3. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS AND TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (Pages 7 - 10)

To consider a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer regarding the outcome of the selection processes for the appointment of Lead and Deputy Independent Persons and Town and Parish Council representatives.

4. UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS (Pages 11 - 12)

To consider a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer regarding the up-to-date position on the adoption of a Code of Conduct by Town and Parish Councils and the receipt and publication of registration of interests forms on behalf of District and Town and Parish Councillors.

5. TRAINING UPDATE (Pages 13 - 14)

To consider a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer in response to training organised for District and Parish Councillors on the newly adopted Code of Conduct.

6. UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS RECEIVED SINCE 1ST JULY 2012

Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer to report.

7. COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE (Pages 15 - 16)

The Committee on Standards in Public Life published its latest Annual Report in September 2012. In his foreword, the outgoing Chairman, Sir Christopher Kelly KCB commented – ‘a further preoccupation during the year has been some of the changes to the Local Government Standards regime brought in by the Localism Act 2011 which diverge significantly from previous recommendations we have made. We believe, the new system is inherently risky and we will continue to monitor actively the situation’.

A copy of the full report is accessible via the hyperlink below –

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/committee-standards-public-life-triennial-review-issues-and-questions-paper>

An extract from the document relating to Local Government Standards is appended to the Agenda.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 7th March 2013 at 4pm.

Dated this 28th day of November 2012

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Sharp', written in a cursive style.

Head of Paid Service

Notes

A. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

- (1) *Members are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and unless you have obtained dispensation, cannot discuss or vote on the matter at the meeting and must also leave the room whilst the matter is being debated or voted on.*
- (2) *A Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest if it*
 - (a) *relates to you, or*
 - (b) *is an interest of -*
 - (i) *your spouse or civil partner; or*
 - (ii) *a person with whom you are living as husband and wife; or*
 - (iii) *a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners*

and you are aware that the other person has the interest.
- (3) *Disclosable pecuniary interests includes -*
 - (a) *any employment or profession carried out for profit or gain;*
 - (b) *any financial benefit received by the Member in respect of expenses incurred carrying out his or her duties as a Member (except from the Council);*
 - (c) *any current contracts with the Council;*
 - (d) *any beneficial interest in land/property within the Council's area;*
 - (e) *any licence for a month or longer to occupy land in the Council's area;*
 - (f) *any tenancy where the Council is landlord and the Member (or person in (2)(b) above) has a beneficial interest; or*
 - (g) *a beneficial interest (above the specified level) in the shares of any body which has a place of business or land in the Council's area.*

B. Other Interests

- (4) *If a Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest then you are required to declare that interest, but may remain to discuss and vote.*
- (5) *A Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest where -*
 - (a) *a decision in relation to the business being considered might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of you or a member of your family or a person with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the council tax payers, rate payers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the authority's administrative area, or*
 - (b) *it relates to or is likely to affect any of the descriptions referred to above, but in respect of a member of your family (other than specified in (2)(b) above) or a person with whom you have a close association*

and that interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Please contact Ms C Deller, Democratic Services Manager, Tel No 01480 388007/e-mail: Christine.Deller@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Panel.

Specific enquires with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website – www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk (*under Councils and Democracy*).

If you would like a translation of Agenda/Minutes/Reports or would like a large text version or an audio version please contact the Democratic Services Manager and we will try to accommodate your needs.

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

Agenda Item 1

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held in Room CVSO, 1A, Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St. Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 6 September 2012.

PRESENT: Councillors K M Baker, Mrs B E Boddington, Mrs L A Duffy, A Hansard, G J Harlock and T D Sanderson.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor P J Downes.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that Councillor A Hansard be elected Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21st June 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No interests were declared by the Members present.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that Councillor Mrs B E Boddington be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

Before proceeding to consider the remaining business on the Agenda, the Monitoring Officer gave a presentation on the new Code of Conduct and associated arrangements.

5. APPOINTMENT OF LEAD AND DEPUTY INDEPENDENT PERSONS

Further to Minute No. 32 (g) of the meeting held on 21st June 2012, the Committee considered a report by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding progress in the process for the appointment of a Lead and Deputy Independent Person.

Having noted that Independent Persons should be appointed after public advertisement, application and interview, that the posts would attract allowances of £1,000 and £500 respectively and that the Lead Independent Person could attend meetings of the Committee as a non-voting co-optee, Members

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and Councillor T D Sanderson together with the Monitoring Officer be appointed to comprise the Panel to interview candidates for appointment to posts of Lead and Deputy Independent Person; and
- (b) that the Panel be authorised to report to the Council the names of those candidates recommended for appointment.

6. APPOINTMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

Further to Minute No. 32 (f) and having regard to a report by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Members considered how best to approach the appointment of Parish Council representatives to the new Committee.

Bearing in mind how important it was that these representatives should have the trust of Town and Parish Councils in the authority's area and given also the experience and knowledge held by the former Town and Parish Council representatives on the Committee, Members considered that it would be reasonable to:-

- ◆ invite the former Town and Parish Council representatives to express an interest in the two posts;
- ◆ invite the views of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils on the appointment process and, if appropriate, seek the two nominations required through their membership; and
- ◆ invite all Parish Councils to request their Members to express an interest in the positions.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the decision to appoint two Town or Parish Councillors to act as co-opted and non-voting Members of the Committee be reaffirmed;
- (b) that an allowance of £231 per annum be made payable to the two appointed Town and Parish Council representatives plus reimbursement for any subsistence or travelling costs incurred in attending meetings of the Committee or training events;
- (c) that expressions of interest be invited from Town and Parish Councils following the approach recommended

by the Committee; and

- (d) that on the conclusion of the process described in (a) – (c) ante, the Monitoring Officer be authorised to appoint two Town or Parish Council representatives after consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.

7. PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE - STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Referring to a report by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Members considered the content of Article 9 of the Constitution, the current terms of reference of the Committee and proposed amendments required to reflect the way in which it was envisaged that the Committee might operate in the future.

Having discussed the range of minor amendments required to Article 9 which were largely required to take account of changes in legislation and having noted that the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer had previously been authorised by the Council to vary the Constitution in these circumstances after consultation with the Chairmen of the Committee and the Corporate Governance Panel, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that a Sub-Committee comprising three Members be appointed when it is necessary to hear complaints of misconduct by Councillors and to consider urgent requests for dispensation from District Councillors; and
- (b) that the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer be authorised to convene meetings of the Sub-Committee when necessary.

8. NEW STANDARDS REGIME - PROGRESS

By way of a report by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee was updated on the arrangements which had been made to ensure that the District Council complied with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 since the Council adopted a new Code of Conduct at its meeting in July.

Members noted that the Monitoring Officer had issued guidance for District Members and Town and Parish Councils on the adoption of a new Code and on the completion of the Declaration of Interest Forms together with an Advice Note to Parish Clerks on the granting of dispensations. Action also had been taken to encourage interest in the posts of Lead and Deputy Independent Members (Minute No. 5 refers).

Furthermore, the Committee were advised that under the former model Code of Conduct, specific circumstances were prescribed when a Member could exclude themselves from having to declare a prejudicial interest and leave the room when business arose in connection with that interest. As there were no similar exclusions in

the recent Regulations, the Committee

RESOLVED

that a dispensation be granted for the period ending 30th April 2016 to enable all Members to speak and vote in the following circumstances in which it was considered that they would have a disclosable pecuniary interest –

- (i) setting the Council Tax and budget under the Local Government Finance Act 1992; and
- (ii) setting the allowances, payments or indemnities given to Members.

9. MONITORING OFFICER PROTOCOL AND FLOWCHART

Further to Minute No. 32 (j), the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer circulated to the Committee draft Model Arrangements for dealing with standards allegations under the Localism Act 2011 and a draft complaints procedure flow chart. (Copies of both documents are appended in the Minute Book).

The Committee reaffirmed its view that the new protocol should include a requirement for complaints made about Parish Councils to be referred, in the first instance, to the relevant Parish Council for local resolution and only considered by the Monitoring Officer once these measures had been exhausted or should such a course of action not be practicable. The Committee also confirmed that there shall be no right of appeal against the outcome of a complaint referred to a Hearings Panel.

Subject to a review of the arrangements after 12 months operation, it was

RESOLVED

that the final version of the protocol and flow chart to be used by the Monitoring Officer when responding to allegations of misconduct by a Member of the District Council or a Parish Council in the District be approved.

10. PROPOSED TRAINING PROGRAMME

Having regard to a report by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and having reaffirmed their view that it remained the role of the Committee to give advice and training on matters relating to the Code of Conduct, Members endorsed proposals for a programme of training sessions to be held in the Autumn at various locations in the District for Town and Parish Councils and for several drop-in sessions to be held in advance of scheduled meetings of District Council Panels and Committees in the current cycle.

Following discussion on the response thus far by the District and Parish Councillors to the requirement for completion of new 'interest' forms, the Monitoring Officer undertook to discuss with the Chairman the action which might need to be taken should forms not be returned.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 6th December 2012 at 4pm.

Chairman

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**APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS AND TOWN AND PARISH
COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES
(Report by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services
and Monitoring Officer)**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Members may recall that at their last meeting, the Committee:-

- ◆ authorised the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillor T D Sanderson together with the Monitoring Officer to interview candidates for appointment to posts of Lead and Deputy Independent Persons; and
- ◆ Requested the Monitoring Officer to invite expressions of interest from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils, Town and Parish Councils and the former representative for the two new positions of Town and Parish Council representatives on the Committee

1.2 This report describes the steps taken thus far to comply with the Committee's wishes.

2. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS

2.1 In response to a public advertisement, four applications were received for the posts of Lead and Deputy Independent Person. Following interviews on 20th and 21st September, the Panel recommended two candidates to the Council for appointment as Lead and Deputy Independent Persons. Subsequently, the Council endorsed the recommendation of the Interviewing Panel and Mr M Lynch and Mr D Hall were appointed to the posts of Lead and Deputy Independent Persons respectively for the period to 30th June 2013. The appointees will be entitled to receive allowances of £1,000 and £500 respectively plus reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses.

2.2 Since their appointment both the Lead and Deputy Independent Persons have observed training sessions on the Code of Conduct for Town and Parish Councils and attended a workshop for Independent Persons held at Camden Town Hall on 15th November 2012. The Lead Independent Person also has, after consultation with the Monitoring Officer, reviewed the first complaint received under the new arrangements required to be put in place by Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011.

2.3 The workshop attended by the Independent Persons presented an opportunity to gain an insight into the early challenges experienced by other Authorities and discussed:-

- ◆ the role of the new Independent Person;
- ◆ the key principles of the Code of Conduct;
- ◆ the handling of investigations;
- ◆ how the Independent Person can help the Monitoring Officer to make the local process work well.

2.4 The session has revealed a number of issues which require further attention and these are to be explored by the Monitoring Officer and Independent Persons in advance of the Committee. Briefly these concern the administrative matters relating to the appointment, the process for dealing with complaints, publicity and the protocol for attendance at Council meetings. The Monitoring Officer will update the Committee on the outcome of these discussions.

3. APPOINTMENT OF TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

3.1 The Committee had decided to appoint two Town and Parish Council representatives as co-opted and non-voting Members on the Committee. It was agreed that an allowance of £231.00 per annum should continue to be payable to the appointees plus reimbursement for subsistence/travelling costs when attending meetings of the Committee and training events.

3.2 In accordance with the Committee's instructions:-

- ◆ the former Town and Parish Council representatives were invited to express an interest in the two posts;
- ◆ the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils were invited to comment on the appointments process and to seek nominations through their membership;
- ◆ members of Parish Councils were directly asked to express an interest in the positions.

3.3 A copy of the guidance notes circulated to Town and Parish Councils via the "Parish Alert" is appended hereto.

3.4 Following the Committee's approach, six expressions of interest together with supporting statements have been received from Parish Councillors.

3.5 The Monitoring Officer has been authorised, after consultation with the Chairman, to select the two Parish Councillors best suited to the role of Town and Parish Council representative on the Committee.

3.6 An update on the progress of this process will be reported at the meeting.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The Committee is requested to note the progress achieved with the support of an independent person in the new complaints arrangements and the steps taken thus far to appoint two Town and Parish Council representatives to the Committee.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

CONTACT OFFICER: Christine Deller, Democratic Services Manager
Tel Nos: (01480) 388007.

APPOINTMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

GUIDANCE NOTES

1. Background

1.1 Huntingdonshire District Council is seeking to recruit two Parish Council representatives to serve on its Standards Committee.

1.2 Despite changes to 'standards' arrangements under the Localism Act 2011, the Council is still required to -

- ◆ promote and maintain high standards of conduct by elected and co-opted Members;
- ◆ adopt a Code of Conduct and establish and maintain a new Register of Members' Interests for both District and Parish Councillors;
- ◆ have in place arrangements under which complaints can be investigated and allegations of misconduct can be made against District and Parish Councillors.

2. Retention of the Standards Committee

2.1 Whilst it is no longer a duty under law to establish a Standards Committee, the District Council has decided to retain a committee for this purpose on the basis that there still was a need to respond to standards issues and consider how to deal with complaints and investigations.

2.2 The new committee comprises seven elected Members of the District Council. An Independent Person, appointed recently, may also attend meetings, but in a non-voting capacity.

3. Why do we need Parish Council Representatives?

3.1 The District Council still has responsibility for dealing with complaints against Town and Parish Councillors. The Standards Committee will also continue to train Parish Councils on the Code of Conduct and offer advice when requested. Having Parish Council representatives as Members of the Committee (or as part of case hearings) will ensure that the Committee retains an insight into the work and practices of local councils and such representatives also will continue to bring knowledge to the meetings on local issues which has been valuable in the past when assessing parish cases.

4. What is expected of a Parish Council Representative?

4.1 Parish Council representatives will be invited to attend quarterly meetings. Currently these are usually held on weekdays in the late afternoon at Pathfinder House, Huntingdon. Additional meetings may be convened as necessary according to the scheduling of urgent business which may need to be transacted at short (but rarely less than a week's) notice. There may also be case hearings held to determine whether a Councillor has breached the Code of Conduct but again these should be infrequent.

4.2 In return the District Council will -

- ◆ provide you with advice and support;
- ◆ pay for you to attend approved training courses; and
- ◆ reimburse your reasonable travelling and subsistence costs in attending meetings and training events. An allowance of £231 per annum also would be payable and it would be the expectation that those appointed would serve for a three year term.

5. Still Interested?

5.1 If you wish to express an interest in the positions, please do so in writing to the Monitoring Officer in no more than 250 words by **2nd November 2012** and return it to -

Colin Meadowcroft
Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon PE29 3TN

5.2 However, should you wish to discuss this opportunity informally before composing your statement please contact Christine Deller ☎ 01480 388007.

5.3 Out of courtesy you might wish to seek the support of the Chairman of your Town or Parish Council before submitting your statement.

5.4 Your interest will be considered by the Chairman of the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer.

5.5 Thank you for your interest.

**UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT AND REGISTER OF DISCLOSABLE
PECUNIARY INTERESTS
(Report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and
Monitoring Officer)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members may recall that under Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011, the Monitoring Officer retained as a duty, a requirement to establish and maintain a register of interests of Members and Co-opted Members of the Authority (the District Council). The legislation also provided that the Monitoring Officer should continue to be responsible for maintaining the Register for Parish Councils which should be open for inspection at the District Council's offices and published on the District Council's website. Where a Parish Council has a website, the District Council also is required to provide that Council with the information required to enable them to publish their current register on its own website.
- 1.2 Because of some uncertainty in the legislation, the Monitoring Officer considered that Disclosable Pecuniary Interest forms (DPIs) should be returned within 28 days from the date on which a new Code had been adopted by the District, Town or Parish Council.
- 1.3 As the Monitoring Officer continued to have responsibility for dealing with complaints against Members of Parish Councils, there was clearly an advantage in encouraging all Councils to adopt the same or largely similar code to that adopted by the District. So whilst it was a decision for each Council to consider, all Town and Parish Councils have been encouraged to adopt the District Council's Code (adopted on 4th July 2012) or alternatively the "Model" produced by the National Association of Local Councils. All Town and Parish Councils were requested to advise the Monitoring Officer when their Council had adopted a new Code and confirm whether it was identical to that of the District or NALCs.
- 1.4 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils also have encouraged Town and Parish Councils to adopt the District Council's version of the Code to seek to achieve consistency in approach across Huntingdonshire.

**2. THE CURRENT POSITION – DISPOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS
(DPIs)**

- 2.1 Following adoption of a Code of Conduct by the District Council on 4th July 2012, DPI forms have now been received from all 52 District Councillors.
- 2.2 Of 71 Town and Parish Councils, 21 have had their register published (which comprises the DPIs of all Councillors) on the District Council's

website and copies of their register returned to their Clerk for publication locally should that be possible.

- 2.3 In terms of individual DPis, 371 of the total of 650 have been received from Parish Councillors and 279 are outstanding. For practical reasons, a Parish Council register is not published until the DPis of all Councillors currently serving on the Parish Council have been received. Two further registers are nearing completion.
- 2.4 Whilst the Monitoring Officer exercised some leniency in the early stages of this process, mainly due to the varied meeting arrangements of the Parish Councils, it is now prudent to consider what action the Monitoring Officer should take to pursue those Councils where DPis remain outstanding.

3. THE CURRENT POSITION – CODES OF CONDUCT

- 3.1 Whilst there is no legal obligation upon the Town and Parish Councils to notify the Monitoring Officer, records indicate that 61 (of 71 Town and Parish Councils) have adopted a Code of Conduct. Fifty of those Parish Councils have adopted, possibly with some minor amendments to reflect local circumstances, a Code based on that adopted by the District Council. Eleven Town and Parish Councils have opted for the Code promoted by NALC. Of the remainder, the Monitoring Officer is aware that four Councils have progressed towards adoption of a Code but confirmation is awaited as to what version that might be. There are six Councils where it is not yet clear what action, if any, has been taken.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This report represents the position at the time of the despatch of the Agenda and will be updated at the meeting.
- 4.2 In noting the updated position, however, the Committee may wish to express a view on the action it considers would be appropriate to take against those Councillors who have yet to submit their DPis to the Monitoring Officer.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Register of DPis

Contact Officer: Christine Deller – Democratic Services Manager, 01480 388007.

TRAINING UPDATE
(Report by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services
and Monitoring Officer)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the meeting in September, the Committee were of the view that it remained part of their terms of reference and essential to their role to give advice and training on matters relating to the Code of Conduct.
- 1.2 As a consequence, the Committee endorsed proposals for a programme of training sessions on the new Code of Conduct to be held in various locations in the District for Town and Parish Councils and for several 'drop-in' sessions to be arranged for District Councillors and held in advance of scheduled meetings of Panels and Committees.

2. RESPONSE TO TRAINING

- 2.1 In addition to the session on the new Code of Conduct presented by the Monitoring Officer to the last meeting of this Committee, the Monitoring Officer also offered four 'drop-in' sessions on the Code to District Council Members in advance of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels (Environmental and Social Well-Being), Development Management Panel and the Executive Leaders' Strategy Group. The latter is attended by the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and Executive Councillors. To offer as much flexibility as possible, the sessions were scheduled on different days during weeks in September and October (11th and 17th September and 2nd and 11th October). Members were invited to attend whichever session was best suited to them and also advised of the dates of the sessions for town and parish councils as alternative options should these dates be more convenient. In total, 24 District Councillors attended a Code of Conduct training session.
- 2.2 Four sessions were offered to Town and Parish Councils and these were promoted by e-mails and the monthly 'Parish Alert'. The sessions took place in Little Paxton, Warboys and Huntingdon on 10th, 18th and 25th October respectively and in St. Ives on 7th November 2012. With the exception of St. Ives, attendance generally was disappointing with attendance figures as follows:-

Little Paxton	– 5
Warboys	– 8
Huntingdon	– 10
St. Ives	– 21

The following Town and Parish Councils were represented:-

Alconbury Weston, Earith, Godmanchester, Houghton and Wyton, Huntingdon, Holywell-cum-Needingworth, Kings Ripton, Somersham, Spaldwick, Stow Longa, Southoe and Midloe, St. Ives, Warboys, Woodhurst and Wyton-on-the-Hill.

One of the two Independent Persons was present at three of the four sessions.

- 2.3 The training appeared to be well received and prompted some probing and interesting questions. Attendance also has resulted in a number of follow-up contacts with the Monitoring Officer. It became clear, during these sessions, that some Councils had chosen to send a representative to the training with the expectation that the individual concerned would report back to the ensuing Parish Council meeting. A copy of the power point presentation used during the sessions also has been forwarded to parish councils, on request, in support of this arrangement.
- 2.4 All participants were sent a certificate in recognition of their attendance at a Code of Conduct training session. This is signed by the Monitoring Officer.
- 2.5 Buckden, Ellington, Hilton, St. Neots, Ramsey and Farcet (on behalf of the northern parishes) also have tentatively suggested that a session on the Code might be arranged with the Monitoring Officer either in advance of their normal parish council business or on a separate occasion.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Monitoring Officer organised eight training sessions on the Code of Conduct from September – November. Although overall attendance was disappointing, feedback during and since the sessions has been very positive and there appears to be an opportunity to extend the training elsewhere in the District.
- 3.2 In noting the information in the report, the Committee may wish to comment on the manner in which training on the Code of Conduct was organised and any ways in which better attendance might be encouraged in the future.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Contact Officer:
Christine Deller, Democratic Services Manager
Tel Nos: (01480) 388007

Local government standards

16. The Localism Act received Royal Assent in January 2012. The legislation abolished Standards for England, the body charged with the oversight of the local authority standards regime, with effect from 31 March 2012.
17. The Committee welcomed the Act's objectives of returning to a standards regime operated at a local level and recognised the importance of limiting vexatious complaints. But we were concerned that the original bill went too far in dismantling some of the other elements in the previous regime. We were pleased therefore that amendments were made in the House of Lords to maintain a mandatory requirement for each Local Authority to have a code of conduct based on the Nolan Principles and to retain some provision to investigate non-adherence to the code.
18. We remain concerned, however, about what we regard as inadequate sanctions in the new arrangements for non-adherence to local authorities' new codes. We believe that it is insufficient to leave any instances of poor conduct to be dealt with only through the criminal law or through the discipline of the ballot box. In our view there have been numerous examples of types of behaviour for which a criminal prosecution would not be appropriate, or easy to undertake, but which most people would think fall short of the standards expected of public office holders and deserving of some sort of sanction.
19. We believe that there is a significant risk under the new arrangements that inappropriate conduct by local authority members will not be dealt with effectively, eroding public confidence in local government at a time when the scope of local decision-making in planning and other matters is being increased. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Civil service and public appointments

20. The Commissioner for Public Appointments, Sir David Normington, issued a consultation paper on proposals for amending the public appointments system with a view to making it more proportionate, principled and risk-based in June 2011. The existing regulatory system dated back to 1995 when it was established as a response to recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in our first report.
21. The consultation paper suggested that good progress had been made over 15 years in establishing that ministerial appointments to public office should be on merit after a fair and open process and that clear processes were in place to guard against cronyism and political patronage. But it also

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