

**TRAINING: ROUND-UP**  
**(Report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Committee is tasked by its terms of reference to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members by giving advice and training on matters relating to the Codes of Conduct.
- 1.2 This report describes the training activity undertaken/planned by the Monitoring Officer.

**2. TRAINING FOR NEW MEMBERS**

- 2.1 Newly elected Parish Councillors and Co-opted Members have been invited to participate in a session on the ethical framework, standards and the code of conduct. The invitation also was extended to existing Parish Councillors who might have benefited from a reminder of the requirements of the Code. The session, which was held in early July was led by the Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Democratic Services Manager.

- 2.2 Representatives from the following Parishes were present –

Alconbury (2), Colne, Hemingford Grey (3), Holywell-cum-Needingworth, Houghton and Wyton, Somersham, The Stukeleys (2), Yaxley and Yelling (2).

The session, of approximately one and a half hours duration, comprised a presentation, the opportunity to review example scenarios in small groups and a Standards Board for England (“SBE”) video. The Chairman of the Committee was present and a certificate of achievement has been sent to all those who participated. The training was well received and provoked wide-ranging discussion during the evening and prompted a number of subsequent enquiries.

- 2.3 Those present were reminded that the Monitoring Officer and his colleagues were available to attend Parish Council meetings and to give advice on an ongoing basis.
- 2.4 The Monitoring Officer participated in a training session organised by the Cambridgeshire Association of Local Councils on Saturday, 24th June for newly-elected Parish Councillors.
- 2.5 Induction training for all new District Councillors was held in late-June. This was hosted by the Head of Administration and Democratic Services Manager and included a session on the Code of Conduct.

**3. UPCOMING ARRANGEMENTS**

- 3.1 As several Members of Ramsey Town Council had been involved in recent complaints made to the SBE and whilst these had not been pursued, the Monitoring Officer has offered to attend an upcoming

meeting of the Town Council. This offer has been accepted and a short presentation on the code will be given to Members of the Town Council in advance of their next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 14th September 2006. The Chairman of the Standards Committee also will be present.

- 3.2 As Farcet Parish Council have several new Members, the Clerk has requested the Monitoring Officer and his staff to attend their meeting on October 10th 2006 to address the Council on the Code, to answer questions and to offer guidance on issues upon which the Councillors may have concerns.
- 3.3 Preliminary enquiries also have been made with Grafham Parish Council with a view to attending a future meeting of that Parish to offer similar training.

#### **4. STANDARDS BOARD DIRECTIONS**

- 4.1 A facility is available via Section 66(6) of the Local Government Act, 2000 and Regulations made thereunder for an SBE Ethical Standards Officer to issue directions to Monitoring Officers to help resolve disputes locally. This is regarded – certainly by Monitoring Officers – as an alternative approach to the SBE’s processes for investigating and determining allegations as to breaches of the Code where solutions (rather than sanctions) might be sought, eg. by reviewing procedures to make them more robust, arranging training and guidance or getting Councillors to sit down and work out their problems together.
- 4.2 Members may be aware that an allegation had been made against a Member serving on Sawtry Parish Council. Following assessment by an Ethical Standards Officer and representations by the Monitoring Officer, the Standards Board for England has issued a direction to the Monitoring Officer in the following terms –

“I direct that you work with the Chairman and Clerk of Sawtry Parish Council to provide training and guidance to all Members of the Authority on the Code of Conduct, with particular reference to the obligations imposed in respect of personal and prejudicial interests. A report should be provided to me within three months of the date of this direction (31st July 2006) outlining progress and any future plans of action”.

- 4.3 Arrangements currently are being pursued with Sawtry Parish Council to enable the Monitoring Officer to comply with this direction.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 Members are requested to note arrangements made to fulfil the Committee’s obligations in terms of training and advice on issues relating to the local ethical framework and code of conduct.

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Letter received from the Standards Board for England dated 31st July 2006.

**Contact Officer: Christine Deller, Democratic Services Manager -  
Tel: (01480) 388007.**