

TRAINING - UPDATE

(Report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the last meeting, the Committee noted the approach to be taken by the Monitoring Officer towards training activity on the new Code of Conduct (Minute No. 13 refers).
- 1.2 A programme of training for District, Town and Parish Councillors on the requirements of the new Code of Conduct was compiled and invitations sent to Town and Parish Councils in Huntingdonshire. A copy of the final programme is enclosed. When issuing an invitation to the sessions, Parish Councils were reminded that the Monitoring Officer and his colleagues were available to attend individual Town and Parish Council meetings should that be preferred.

2. RESPONSE

- 2.1 At the time of writing, the Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services Manager have hosted three sessions. The first, held in July, for Town and Parish Councils was well received and attended by 18 Parish Councillors representing the following parishes – Barham and Woolley, Buckden, Buckworth, Bluntisham, Colne, Fenstanton, Great Paxton, Little Paxton, St. Neots and Ramsey. Each representative has received a certificate of attendance and the training register has been updated accordingly. A similar sized attendance is expected in St. Ives on 5th September 2007. By the time of the Committee meeting, the programme will have concluded and the Monitoring Officer will be in a position to report on the overall impact of the sessions.
- 2.2 Nineteen District Councillors have attended the two drop-in sessions held thus far at Pathfinder House.
- 2.3 Arrangements also have been made for either the Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services Manager to attend meetings of the following Town/Parish Councils during the Autumn –
- 4th October – Little Paxton
11th October – Godmanchester
31st October – St. Ives
1st November – Huntingdon
- 2.4 An enquiry also has been received about the possibility of a joint session with Ellington, Stow Longa and Spaldwick Parish Councils if a suitable venue/date can be established to the convenience of the Members of each authority.

- 2.5 The Chairman of the Committee and the newly appointed Independent Members attended the session at the Leisure Centre in St. Ives on 5th September 2007.

3. CAMBRIDGESHIRE STANDARDS COMMITTEES NETWORK

- 3.1 The Chairman and Democratic Services Manager will be representing Huntingdonshire at the next meeting of the Cambridgeshire Standards Committees Network which comprises Standards Committee Chairmen and Monitoring Officers' staff from the Cambridgeshire Authorities. The network is to meet on Monday 29th October at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council. Members are invited to submit Agenda Items for discussion and thus far the following have arisen -

- ◆ A year in the life of (updates from authority Members);
- ◆ local filter process – national pilot project;
- ◆ possible merger of Cambridgeshire and Suffolk Standards Committee Networks.

Members of the Committee are welcome to highlight any issues they would wish the Chairman to raise at this meeting.

4. DVD

- 4.1 The Committee will recall that the Standards Board for England has produced a range of training materials on the new Code for local authorities to use, including a DVD. Despite suggestions that the DVD would be made available in July it has still not been received. It is understood that the "Code Uncovered", the Board's new training DVD, will now be distributed to all Monitoring Officers and County Association Secretaries by the week ending 7th September. Should it be available, the DVD will be shown at the meeting. The DVD uses a dramatised scenario to illustrate the lead up to a potentially explosive Planning Committee meeting and highlights the key changes to the revised Code of Conduct. The film examines the rules about declaring interests, disclosing confidential information and bullying. It also features learning points, identifying key elements to consider when following the rules governing Members' behaviour.

5. PRE-DETERMINATION OR BIAS – AN OCCASIONAL PAPER

- 5.1 In response to Members' enquiries about the availability of case studies and best practice guidance, an occasional paper produced by the Standards Board for England on "Predisposition, Predetermination or Bias, and the Code" was recently circulated to all elected and co-opted Members of the Council.
- 5.2 Pre-determination and bias have proved to be both difficult and controversial issues for many Members and Monitoring Officers and it is hoped that the paper, based on advice from leading Treasury Counsel, Philip Sales, QC, will be helpful in that respect.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The Committee is requested to note –

- ◆ the success and extent of the training activity undertaken on the new Code of Conduct; and
- ◆ the upcoming meeting of the Cambridgeshire Standards Committee Network; and

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Correspondence received from Parish Councils, Standards Board Bulletin Number 34.

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