

**USE OF RESOURCES JUDGEMENTS 2007/08**  
**(Report by the Head of Legal and Estates and Monitoring Officer)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At their meeting held on 7th December 2006 (Minute No. 31 refers), the Committee considered a report by the, then Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer which had been submitted in response to a requirement highlighted by the Audit Commission under the theme – “Internal Control” in their Use of Resources Judgements 2005/06 for “an assessment of the standards of ethical conduct across the organisation”. The Use of Resources Judgement assesses how well Councils manage and use their financial resources and focuses on the importance of having sound and strategic financial management to ensure that resources are available to support the Council’s priorities and services.
- 1.2 To comply with this requirement, identified as KLOE 4.3 (Key Line of Enquiry), the Committee noted that an annual survey of complaints by type, locality and outcome and of the training received by Councillors (both District and Parish) would need to be undertaken and the outcomes reported to the Committee. A training programme for the following year could then be structured to meet any emerging needs or trends.
- 1.3 This report represents the 2007/08 Annual Review and the evidence base required by the Audit Commission.

**2. 2007/08 SURVEY**

- 2.1 In accordance with established procedures, the Standards Board for England continued to notify the Monitoring Officer of decisions taken by the Board up to 7th May 2008. Details of the three cases notified during this period are reflected in the Appendix hereto.
- 2.2 The Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 came into force on 8th May. These Regulations provided for the initial assessment of allegations of Member misconduct to be transferred from the Board to local authority Standards Committees. For this purpose, Members will recall that the Standards Committee established a Referrals (Assessment) Sub-Committee at their meeting held on 5th June 2008 (Minute No.6 refers) specifically tasked with deciding whether allegations which had been received appeared to disclose a breach of the Code of Conduct and whether they merited investigation. The Referrals (Assessment) Sub-Committee has

- met on six occasions since 8th May and details of the cases considered at their meetings also are reflected in the Appendix.
- 2.3 In brief, and in all but one case, the Sub-Committee has decided not to refer the allegations made for investigation and (in one case) to take no further action. In making these decisions, the Sub-Committee has strived to be constructive in the course of action that it has recommended and therefore on two occasions has considered it appropriate to direct the Monitoring Officer to provide training to the Parish Councils concerned.

### **3. TRAINING TARGETS – COMMENTS**

- 3.1 It continues to be difficult to identify whether any trend is emerging when reviewing the areas of the Code under which complaints have arisen. Therefore and rather than set specific targets, the Monitoring Officer continues to be proactive generally and, in building good working relationships with Clerks of the Towns and Parishes, has been inclined to offer training to Councils as soon as it becomes apparent from contacts/enquiries that further guidance on the Code would be beneficial. It is hoped that the continuation of this approach will help to prevent allegations of misconduct from arising.
- 3.2 Looking at the Authorities where formal complaints have arisen during the year, it can be seen that the Monitoring Officer has responded positively by presenting training where required and has visited several other Councils for training purposes either at the request of the Council or in response to particular circumstances in the Parish –

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Date (2008)</b>
Godmanchester Town	January
Northern Parishes including Elton, Farcet, Glatton, Sibson-cum-Stibbington and Yaxley	February
St. Ives Town	May
Little Paxton	July
St. Neots	October
Kimbolton and Stonely	October

- 3.3 In addition, the Monitoring Officer hosted a session for District Councillors in September during which the DVD 'The Code Uncovered' was viewed and a discussion held. This session is to be repeated for Members of the District Council's Development Control Panel in December. A total of 67 town and parish councillors and clerks have received training on the Code of Conduct in 2008 and certificates in recognition of their attendance for training have been awarded.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Monitoring Officer continues to target and respond to Parish Councils in terms of their compliance with the Code of Conduct as circumstances evolve and the need for training is identified. It is suggested that the approach which involves the targeting of individual councils together with open sessions be continued.
- 4.2 The Committee is invited to note the contents of this annual report.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Huntingdonshire District Council – Use of Resources Judgements 2005/06.

Previous Standards Committee Reports and Minutes.

Town and Parish Councils – Training Records.

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