
Standards Committee

Report of the meeting held on 4th December 2008

Matters for Information

12. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillors J Alexander and M Reece have been appointed by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils to serve as Parish Council representatives on the Committee and will commence their new duties with effect from 1st January 2009. Together with long-serving Member, Councillor G Watkins, the Committee now comprises three Parish Council representatives, as provided in the Constitution. Having tendered his resignation, the Committee has thanked Parish Councillor D MacPherson for his contribution to its work since the introduction of the first model code of conduct in 2001.

13. REFERRALS (ASSESSMENT) SUB-COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Referrals (Assessment) Sub-Committee has reported on three cases which have been considered recently. Of these, the Committee has noted that one allegation has been referred for investigation and one referred to the Monitoring Officer for other action including training. No further action is to be taken in the other case.

14. CODES OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES

The Committee has approved a series of suggested responses to the consultation paper "Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power: – Codes of Conduct for Local Authority Members and Employees which will be submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Views were invited on proposals to revise the Local Authorities Model Code of Conduct Order 2007 and it is anticipated that a new code incorporating the outcome of the consultation exercise will come into effect by May 2009. The most significant revision to the Member's Code involves the issue of "private capacity" to cover those occasions where a Members' criminal behaviour in a private capacity brings disrepute to a local authority. The Monitoring Officer will offer further training to District and Parish Councillors following the introduction of changes to the Code in May.

That part of the consultation paper relating to a proposed code of conduct for employees will be considered by the Employment Panel.

15. USE OF RESOURCES JUDGEMENTS 2007/8

In compliance with the requirements of the Audit Commission (KLOE 4.3 - key line of enquiry), the Committee has undertaken its annual review of the “standards of ethical conduct across the organisation”. This involves a survey of complaints received under the Model Code of Conduct by type, locality and outcome and an appraisal of the training received by councillors (both District and Parish) during the year. The outcome of the survey influences the structure of the training programme for the following year to meet any emerging trends or needs.

Because of the difficulty in identifying any particular trends from the 2007/8 data, the Standards Committee has encouraged the Monitoring Officer to be proactive generally, to continue to build good working relationships with town and parish councils and to offer training to Councils as soon as it becomes apparent from contacts/enquiries that further guidance on the Code could be beneficial. In this way, a total of 67 town and parish councillors and clerks have received training on the Code in 2008 and certificates in recognition of their attendance for training were awarded. The Committee has endorsed the continuation of this approach to training.

16. OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

The Committee has –

- ◆ noted the nature of the code of conduct enquiries recorded by the Monitoring Officer since its last meeting in September;
- ◆ invited the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition to address them at a future meeting on their expectations of the Committee; and
- ◆ conducted for training purposes, a local assessment exercise.

D L Hall
Chairman