

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.

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