

## MEMBER TRAINING

### 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report considers how members should be trained in the requirements of the new Code of Conduct and competency training generally; and how the Standards Committee might evaluate the effectiveness of this training.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 A key role of the Standards Committee is to ensure that members are properly trained in the requirements of the National Code. Section 54 of the Local Government Act 2000 states that the Committee is responsible for:
- (a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by the members and co-opted members of the authority;
  - (b) assisting members and co-opted members of the authority to observe the authority's code of conduct;
  - (c) monitoring the operation of the authority's code of conduct;
  - (d) advising, training or arranging to train members and co-opted members of the authority on matters relating to the authority's code of conduct.
- 2.2 In addition, the Council has included a requirement that the Standards Committee should determine the minimum level of competency training for Members.

### 3 TRAINING REQUIREMENTS - CODE OF CONDUCT

- 3.1 There are five main aspects to the new Code where members will require training:-
- background
  - general obligations
  - declarations of interest
  - the need to notify the Monitoring Officer of financial and other entries in the Register
  - the Register of gifts and hospitality

These aspects are examined in turn.

**Background**

This covers the national structure for dealing with complaints and the roles of:

- Monitoring Officer
- The Standards Committee
- Standards Board and its Ethical Standards Officers and Adjudication Panels

**General Obligations**

- general principles governing conduct
- when the code applies (outside bodies, private life etc)
- the duty of confidentiality
- bringing the authority into disrepute
- taking personal advantage
- duty to report others' transgressions
- promoting equality

**Declarations of Interest**

- when does the duty to disclose arise?
- how much detail must be given?
- what is a personal interest?
- when does a personal interest become prejudicial?
- when do you have to leave a meeting?
- how/when to apply for a dispensation

**The Register of Members' Interests**

- what has to be declared to the Monitoring Officer
- when it has to be done (for the first time, for updating)
- rights of public inspection

**The Register of Gifts and Hospitality**

- what has to be declared
- when it has to be declared

**Promoting Equality of Opportunity**

This is the first duty mentioned in the Code. The Standards Committee may wish to monitor this as it does the rest of any agreed training programme.

- 3.2 A session on the Code of Conduct was held as part of the induction training, but this needs to be repeated as not all Members were able to attend.

#### **4 INDUCTION TRAINING**

- 4.1 As there were full Council elections on 2 May 2002, a comprehensive programme of induction session for Councillors has already taken place. This comprised:-

**Session 1** What the Council Does  
The Committee Structure

**Session 2** The Role of the Councillor  
The Code of Conduct  
Services for Members

**Session 3** Financing of the Council and Budget Process

**Session 4** Environmental Health  
Refuse Collection  
Cleansing

**Session 5** Housing Policy  
Housing Management

**Session 6** Revenues  
Council Tax  
Benefits

**Session 7** Planning

- 4.2 These sessions were delivered by the Council's staff and were run in the afternoon and repeated in the evening. An average of 24 Members attended each session.

#### **5 COMPETENCY TRAINING FOR MEMBERS**

- 5.1 In the last few weeks all elected Members received a questionnaire that included a survey of training requirements. 74% of Members responded and the results are attached at appendix 1.
- 5.2 The following training sessions are proposed as a result of that survey:-

Overview and Scrutiny
Chairmanship of meetings
Media skills

Speed reading
Partnership arrangements
Best Value/Comprehensive Performance Assessment
Highways
Appeals/Licensing
Leisure contract
Web Site (practical demonstration)
Strategic context (i.e. Corporate Plans)
Emergency planning

- 5.3 It is suggested that training should also be included on the Planning Protocol and the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations as local guidance supporting but not forming part of the Code of Conduct. In addition, new contract standing orders and financial regulations are being drafted for Members consideration and staff and Member training in this area would be useful in due course.
- 5.4 There has also been a request for personal computer training which could be included as part of the training programme.
- 5.5 A training course has already been held for Members of the Appeals and Licensing Committee on the specific area of homelessness reviews in preparation for any appeals which may need to be heard.
- 5.6 Members may also like to consider whether in future years training packages from such agencies as the Improvement and Development Agency (IDEA) and the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) around the modernisation programme and Members' skills development should be brought forward for Member consideration and use, although these programmes can be quite costly, e.g., approximately £1,000 - £1,500 per Member.

## **6 DELIVERY OF TRAINING**

- 6.1 A large proportion of training will be delivered internally using the Council's own staff. The type of training will, so far as possible, be participative.
- 6.2 Training sessions will be organised throughout the remainder of 2002, and a draft schedule will be available for the meeting.

**7 MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

- 7.1 Details will be kept of attendance at training sessions, so the Standards Committee will be able to monitor the take up of the training and the Standards Committee will receive an annual summary of all member training.
- 7.2 How will the success, or otherwise, of the training be assessed?
- in the short-term, a customer satisfaction questionnaire after each training event can be used
  - this can be followed up after (say) six to eight months asking members if they need further training on certain aspects, or a general “refresher”
  - in the longer term, the Standards Committee can monitor the number of complaints to the Standards Board; and the percentage of these which resulted in some kind of finding against the member involved.

**8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The costs of the training programme can be met from the Members Support and Training Budget.

**9 RECOMMENDATION**

- 9.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That the training programme set out in this report be adopted.  
(CD(LPA))

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**Background Papers:**

Services for Members survey.

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