

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 11 FEBRUARY 2009

MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING - UPDATE

REPORT OF HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To report back to the Committee with further suggestions for the Code of Conduct Training programme for the next municipal year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee consider the proposals put forward and provide approval or further comments as appropriate.**

3. SUMMARY

Following a Code of Conduct training exercise in November 2008 that received relatively poor feedback this Committee has asked for a review of training and for officers to report back with suggestions as to how training can be improved in the future. Officers have considered options available in view of the comments put forward at the last meeting. The suggestion is that the Code of Conduct training is changed to reduce the numbers attending the training, change to a workshop style of training and to provide more training sessions possibly at venues throughout the Borough.

4. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Standards Committee – 24 January 2005,
Standards and Audit Committee – 4 April 2006, 21 April 2006, 12 September 2006, 11 September 2007 (ST – 24), 29 January 2008 (ST – 50),
Standards Committee – 18 December 2008 (ST - 23)

5. INFORMATION

5.1 Background

On 18 December 2008 the Standards Committee considered a report providing feedback on the Code of Conduct training provided for Borough and Parish Councillors on 12 November. The Committee expressed disappointment with the training and asked that officers

consider how training could be improved in the future. Officers were tasked with reporting back to the Standards Committee with proposals for training during the next municipal year.

The proposals for Code of Conduct training are as follows:-

- A more interactive style of training with a workshop/café style layout. This would include more emphasis on elected members looking at case studies and contributing more during the training sessions.
- A reduction in the maximum capacity for the training sessions but with an increase in the amount of training sessions available. This would include stretching the training sessions over a period of a few weeks allowing all members an opportunity to attend and providing afternoon and evening sessions to accommodate and encourage members who may not have attended in the past because of other commitments.
- Providing various venues around the Borough and not limiting the provision of the training solely to the Civic Offices. This again is with a view in particular to encouraging Parish Councillors to attend a nearby location for the training.
- Reviewing the use of external trainers and considering providing more training by officers which would reduce expenditure and allow more workshop sessions to take place.
- Seeking views from elected members as to the aspects of the Code which they find most challenging and preparing the training accordingly.

The Code of Conduct is expected to change this year with particular emphasis on the reintroduction of actions undertaken by members in a private capacity being covered by the Code of Conduct. Accordingly it is important to ensure appropriate timing of the training to encapsulate the new changes. With this in mind the following timetable is proposed for undertaking the training in the future.

- Report back to Standards Committee at the meeting on 21 April 2009 to provide specific details of provisional dates, venues, trainers and an outline of the training material.
- September/October 2009 – provide the Code of Conduct training as agreed by Standards Committee.

- December 2009 – report back to Standards Committee with feedback on the training and for a further decision in respect of whether further training is required during the 2009/10 municipal year or alternatively to commence plans for training for the next municipal year.

5.2 Equal Opportunities

Every effort is made to ensure that the Code of Conduct training is accessible to all. This consideration will continue to be kept under review on future occasions.

5.3 Environmental Impact

No implications

5.4 Legal Comment

Attendance at Code of Conduct training is not compulsory but is recommended as good practice. The expected changes to the Code of Conduct mean that it is important that elected members are offered regular training.

5.5 Links with Corporate Priorities

Providing training for elected members on the Code of Conduct on a regular basis helps the council achieve its priority of being an efficient effective and customer focussed Council that delivers value for money for the community.

5.6 Opportunities and Risks

The opportunities and risks associated with providing regular Code of Conduct training have been identified and assessed but relate primarily to governance and the impact on public confidence in the democratic process.

5.7 Financial Implications

Once the detail of the training is finalised the cost of the training can be calculated. It is anticipated that this will be met from within existing budgets.

6. WARD IMPLICATIONS

District wide implications

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

End of Report

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