

ARTICLE 8 EXTRACT

8.02 Role and Function

The Standards Committee will have the following roles and functions:

- (a) to promote and maintain high standards of conduct for councillors and co-opted members;
- (b) to assist the councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (c) to advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (d) to monitor the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (e) to advise, and to provide or arrange for training for councillors and co-opted members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (f) to grant dispensations to councillors and co-opted members from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (g) to deal with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the monitoring officer on any matter which is referred by an ethical standards officer to the monitoring officer;
- (h) to monitor the operation of the Council's whistleblowing procedure;
- (i) to deal with any reports from the Monitoring Officer or the CFO on matters relating to probity issues;
- (j) to exercise (a) to (g) above in relation to the parish councils wholly or mainly in its area and the members of those parish councils.

ANNEXE 2

Possible Training Requirements

There appear to be five main aspects to the new Code where members will require training:-

- 1 background
- 2 general obligations
- 3 declarations of interest (probably the most complex area)
- 4 the need to notify the Monitoring Officer of financial and other entries in the Register
- 5 the Register of gifts and hospitality

The type of training to be provided under these headings is set out below:-

1 Background

This would cover the national structure for dealing with complaints and include roles of:

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

2 General Obligations

This would cover:-

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

3 Declarations of Interest

Historically, the most difficult area for members has been to understand when interests need to be declared, and – in particular – to recognise what type of interest is involved. One of the aims of the new Code was to simplify matters.

Training on this will include:-

- 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?
- special rules for overview & scrutiny?
- how/when to apply for a dispensation

4 The Register of Members' Interests

This will cover:-

- 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

5 The Register of Gifts and Hospitality

This will cover:-

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

Delivery of Training

The training will be delivered internally. Brochures or leaflets on the new requirements will be produced in advance. These may be locally or nationally produced.

The type of training will, so far as possible, be participative and the short modules will be immediately followed by practical exercises on the various aspects of the Code relating to each module. These exercises will be trialled on senior officers, who will also need training on the Code.

Training sessions will be organised during April 2002. All members will be expected to attend one of these.

The training should also cover – probably briefly – the Planning Protocol, the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations and the Officers Code of Conduct (if published) – as local guidance supporting – but not forming part of – the Code.

Monitoring

Details will be kept of attendance at training sessions, so the Standards Committee will be able to monitor the take up of the training.

In addition, it is suggested the Standards Committee receive an annual summary of all member training, since much of it will be relevant in some way to the Code. For example, a modular course on finance will contain elements as to probity, audit etc.

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.

