

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Standards Committee**

**25 April 2017**

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## **Code of Conduct Training for Unitary and Parish Councillors**

### **Purpose of Report**

1. To ask the Standards Committee to endorse the proposed arrangements for training on the code of conduct for unitary and parish councillors following the local elections in May 2017.

### **Background**

2. All councils in Wiltshire have a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members. As part of this duty they are required to adopt a code of conduct dealing with the conduct that is expected of members and co-opted members when they are acting in that capacity. Parish, town and city councils may adopt Wiltshire Council's Code of Conduct or they may adopt one of their own, provided that it is broadly consistent with the principles of conduct in public life - selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty and leadership.
3. As principal authority Wiltshire Council is responsible through its Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer for dealing with all complaints made under the respective codes of conduct for the 256 parish, town and city councils within the unitary authority area. Protocol 12 of the Constitution outlines Wiltshire Council's procedure for dealing with such complaints.
4. All members and co-opted members therefore need to be aware of their obligations under their respective codes of conduct.

### **Training**

5. The Standards Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2017 noted that unitary councillors would be offered training on the Code of Conduct and Complaints Procedure as part of their induction process, and strongly urged all elected and co-opted members to attend this session, which would also include obligations in respect of confidentiality.
6. Training on the Code of Conduct will be covered as part of a broader session on law and governance on Tuesday 9 May 2017, led by the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer. This will cover the behavioural elements of the Code and the rules on registering and declaring interests.
7. Whilst we will endeavour to make the session as informative and helpful as possible, and include time for questions, realistically we will only be able to provide an overview of the essential requirements of the Code within the time available. We

plan, therefore, to offer a follow up session for unitary members at a later date in the nature of a workshop, using case studies to draw out key points in the application of the Code.

8. There is also the need to train new members appointed to the Standards Committee on the role of the Committee and its Review and Hearing Sub- Committees. This could take place before or after the meeting of the Standards Committee on 7 June 2017.
9. With regard to training for parish, town and city councils Wiltshire Council seeks to do all that it can to promote and encourage high standards of conduct across all councils in Wiltshire. However, given the high number of parishes in Wiltshire only limited direct support can be provided within available resources.
10. Training on the code of conduct, particularly on registration and declaration of interests has been provided by the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer to some parish councils on request. It is understood that parish, town and city clerks also provide training for their councils, with support from Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC) for those councils who subscribe to WALC.
11. It is proposed to arrange regional training sessions on the code of conduct for clerks, chairmen and vice- chairmen of parish, town and city councils and local unitary members in the Autumn, in Trowbridge, Chippenham, Devizes and Salisbury. This will be a two hour practical session focusing mainly on registration and declaration of interests and based on a case study we have already used effectively with some parish councils.
12. We are writing to clerks to make them aware of the proposed training and also intend to publicise the events by chairman's announcements at meetings of the Area Boards.
13. Finally, we are reviewing the information we provide on standards matters on our website to ensure that the information is clear and easily accessible to all clerks, councillors and members of the public.

### **Financial Implications**

14. Training will be provided by Wiltshire Council officers from within existing resources.

### **Recommendation**

15. To ask the Standards Committee to endorse the proposed arrangements for training of unitary and parish councillors on the code of conduct following the elections in May 2017.

**Ian Gibbons, Associate Director, Legal and Governance, and Monitoring Officer**

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Unpublished documents relied upon in the production of this report: None