

Code of Conduct Training and Register of Interests Update

Purpose

1. To update the Committee on the responses received so far from parish and town councils regarding codes of conduct, training and registration of interests and to consider any further action that the Committee deem appropriate.

Background

2. At its last meeting on 18 April 2018 the Standards Committee were advised that the Monitoring Officer had written to all parish, town and city clerks in line with the Committee's wishes seeking information on their codes of conduct, registration of interests, training and invited them to share any responses they had submitted in respect of the review of local government ethical standards being undertaken by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. A copy of the letter that was sent out on 13 April 2018 is attached at Appendix 1.
3. The Monitoring Officer agreed to provide the Committee with an update on the responses received. The current position is set out below.

Code of Conduct Training Provision

4. The Monitoring Officer through the Public Law and Compliance Team has undertaken an initial review of training available for parish and town councils in relation to code of conduct and standards related matters. Contact has been made with a number of local authorities in the South West region, and with the County Associations of Local Councils. The intention was to obtain an overview of training currently available and the format in which the training is available.
5. Contact has also been made with Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC), in addition to reviewing the training options available through the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). An internet search of training providers who may specialise in providing training to councils on this subject was also conducted.
6. Training provision is limited with the only training that seemed to be available to councillors being through the County Associations of Local Councils. They use a consultancy firm Hoey Ainscough Associates,

(<http://hoeyainscough.co.uk/index.html>) to deliver training which is subscription based. The Council has previously subscribed to the services provided by this

firm and some members may recall that they provided a training session for unitary councillors a few years ago. There are a limited number of training providers that run a very limited number of national training seminars.

7. NALC appears to deliver training through their regional leads such as WALC. This training would appear to be driven by local demand, capacity, and in response to specific issues that may arise within a parish or town council.
8. Having conducted an initial review of training, there would appear to be very little training available on standards matters. The training does not appear to be uniform across the South West region and we believe that specific training is being provided by authorities locally. We have been unable to identify any over-arching training provision, and the training that has been identified is not e-learning based.
9. Discussions are currently underway within Wiltshire Council to develop an e-learning platform which will enable Wiltshire Council to deliver and track training provision. It was initially hoped that the development of such a tool could adapt training already available, but there would appear to be very little existing training resources from which to draw so it will be necessary to develop this from scratch. The Public Law and Compliance Team lead is scheduled to meet with the lead co-ordinating e-learning development on the 4th July, to take the project forward.
10. In response to the above letter to parish and town councils in Wiltshire 26 councils indicated that they would be interested in undertaking training. They indicated training needs in relation to the following areas:
 - Code of Conduct
 - Registers of Interests – declaring interests and withdrawing from meetings
 - Complaints process
 - Equality Duty
 - Councillor interactions with the public
 - Member and clerk responsibilities
 - Treatment of staff by councillors
 - Dealings with press and social media
 - GDPR, emails and use of own devices at meetings
 - 24 / 7 online resource

Parish Council Code of Conduct Adoption

11. The Monitoring Officer has so far received a total of 151 responses to the request for information, which constitutes a response rate of 64%. The team are following up on those councils who have not yet responded

12. The 151 responses to date are included in the table below detailing the adoption of various types of code of conduct.

Wiltshire Council	80	
NALC	48	
Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Illustrative Code	2	
Own version (based on either the DCLG or NALC versions)	9	
The former statutory code of conduct before the Localism Act 2011 came into effect	4	These councils are adopting a new Code in line with the current legislation
Currently reviewing Code and sending copy in due course	8	
Total	151	

Registers of Interests

13. 9 councils have confirmed that their members' registers of interests are up to date and 83 councils have confirmed that their members have been reminded to update their registers of interests. Of the 151 councils ncil, 59 councils did not respond to this part of the request. This suggests that further, follow up action is needed to ensure that Wiltshire Councillors are complying with their obligations in respect of the registration of interests.

Responses to Local Government Consultation

14. Amesbury Town Council and Erlestoke Parish Council confirmed that they have sent responses to the recent local government consultation on standards. Details of their response will be provided as soon as this is available.

Recommendations

15. The Committee is asked to note the position regarding the responses received to date in relation to the matters covered in the letter to parish, town and city councils and to advise on any further action it considers appropriate.

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Appendix 1 – Letter to Parish, Town and City Council Clerks dated 13 April 2018

