

## Agenda Item 6

Democratic Services  
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# Report

**Subject** : Standards Committee Training for Hearings  
**Report to** : Standards Committee  
**Date** : Monday 20 October 2008  
**Author** : Interim Head of Democratic Services

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### 1. Report Summary:

This report deals with issues relating to the training of members of the committee in dealing the assessment and hearing of complaints.

### 2. Background:

During 2008 most meetings of the committee have included an element of training and development for its members to ensure that an appropriate level of understanding and expertise exists both in relation to the Code of Conduct and conducting assessments and hearings. The implementation of the new provisions for local determination from 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008 makes it more likely that hearings of a quasi-judicial nature will be held. In recognition of this the committee on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008 agreed a competency framework for hearings which sets out the skills, knowledge and behavioural attributes needed to perform this role in any tribunal. This will help ensure that hearings are conducted appropriately and reduce the risk of successful appeal or challenge.

### 3. Training requirements:

- 3.1 Members of the committee will often bring to their role a range of transferable skills from other public roles and /or their professional life which are relevant to the committee's work. However, conducting hearings in the context of the local authority ethical framework is a specialised activity. The robustness of the system will be enhanced if there is a consistent and rigorous approach to training so that all those participating in hearings have been trained. This would be consistent with guidance and advice from



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the Standards Board for England (SBE). The committee does not have the power to insist that members be trained before participating in hearings but it can take action short of this. The Committee could express the view to the Council that members and deputies appointed to the committee should be willing and able to undergo appropriate training and guidance could be given to officers to ensure that so far as practicable any assessment sub-committee convened comprised only members who had undergone a programme of training.

- 3.2 This then raises the issue of what constitutes a satisfactory level of training. In this case the committee would need to take a view on this. Participating in a specified percentage of development activities is one way of dealing with this.
- 3.3 The issue of competency training taking into account the self assessment exercise reported to the meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> September is being pursued with colleagues at Wiltshire County Council. This issue is also addressed in the report at item 5 on the Wiltshire Council standards committee.
- 3.4 The committee has at recent meetings worked through a number of real cases as part of its training and development activities which will be complemented by the competency framework training. Learning from cases which have raised important points is effective and it is suggested that as such case studies become available for example through SBE of the Adjudication Panel for England the committee work through the issues raised.

#### 4. **Recommendation:**

That the committee consider what view it wishes to adopt with regard to development and training activities.

#### 5. **Background papers:**

Only published works have been used in the preparation of this report.

#### 6. **Implications:**

- **Financial** : none
- **Legal** : these are dealt with in the body of the report
- **Human Rights** : none directly
- **Personnel** : none
- **Community Safety** : none
- **Environmental** : none
- **Council's Core Values:** Adoption of the recommendations will support the following core values:
  - provide excellent service
  - promote fairness and equality of opportunity of opportunity for all
  - communicate, especially listening and responding
  - be open and honest
- **Wards Affected:** all.