

Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All Wards (Corporate Issue)

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:
Standards Committee

31 October 2002

Training and Development

Report of the Town Clerk

1. Purpose of Report

To propose a forward programme of training and development for Members of the Standards Committee, Elected Members and officers of the Council to ensure that matters of probity and Standards of Conduct are embedded within the organisation.

2. Summary

One of the principal responsibilities of the Standards Committee is to oversee and ensure the provision of appropriate training to Members and officers to enable them to adhere at all times to the provisions of the Council's Codes and Conventions.

Within the next nine months this training needs to be directed to the following target audiences:-

- (i) Members of the Standards Committee
- (ii) New Councillors (arising from 1/5/03 elections)
- (iii) All Councillors
- (iv) Co-optees
- (v) Officers
- (vi) Those working in partnership with the Council and Member/Officer representation on Outside Bodies.

Targeted and specific training needs to be provided for each of those constituent elements, as detailed in the supporting report.

3. Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- (i) comment upon the programme of training and development.
- (ii) subject to any changes arising out of recommendation (i) above, agree to and support the proposed programme of training and development.

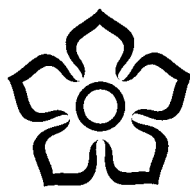
4. Headline Financial and legal Implications

The provision of the training and development programme will be achieved through a mixture of external opportunities and in-house provision. The costs, however, can be contained within existing budgetary provision.

Legislation, notably the Local Government Act 1972 and Local Government Act 2000, imposes a number of requirements on Elected Members, including voting co-optees and officers in relation to matters of ethics and probity. This report seeks to ensure that all those so affected receive sufficient training to enable them to fulfil their legal obligations.

3. Report Author/Officer to contact:

Charles Poole
Service Director (Democratic Services)
extn. 7015



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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Report

Included within the Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee are the following:-

1. To oversee and promote the arrangements to be made by the Council to promote probity and maintain the highest standards in the conduct of business by Members (including co-opted members) and officers; and,
2. To oversee and ensure the provision of appropriate training to Members and officers to enable them to adhere at all times to the provisions of the Codes and Conventions.

Training and development within this context can be categorised into six areas:-

- (i) Members of the Standards Committee
- (ii) New Councillors
- (iii) All Councillors
- (iv) Co-optees
- (v) Officers
- (vi) Those working in partnership with the Council (and Member/officer representation on Outside Bodies).

(i) Members of the Standards Committee

Both the Independent Members and Elected Members of the Standards Committee bring to that area a wealth of knowledge and experience, not least gained from other aspects of their life. Within this setting, it is then appropriate to encompass further training and development associated specifically with the role, functions and activities of the Standards Committee.

The Standards Board for England, which nationally has the lead role for arranging such training and development, is providing the following opportunities:-

(a) Second Annual Assembly of Standards Committees

The second Annual Assembly of Standards Committees is scheduled to be held on 9/10 June 2003, at the International Conference Centre, Birmingham. Other than incidental travel and subsistence, there is no attendance fee for this seminar. Members of the Standards Committee are urged to consider attendance at this event, which is intended to provide the annual national focus on matters of standards and probity.

Furthermore, in an attempt to gain ownership of this event by practitioners, a Steering Committee (approximately 15 in number) has been set up, made up of some of those who attended last year's conference.

This Steering Committee has met twice and will meet again on a further one or two occasions. The organisers would be happy to extend the size of that Steering Committee if any Member felt they wished to join or, alternatively, could join in by e-mail consultation. Alternatively, Members may wish to consider whether they would wish to join at the outset the Steering Committee for the 2004 Conference.

(b) "Talk Back, Look Forward" Regional Roadshows

The Standards Board will be running a series of nine regional roadshows across England, between November 2002 and March 2003. The East Midlands Regional Roadshow is scheduled to be held at the offices of Nottingham City Council in March (date to be determined).

These roadshows are intended to provide an opportunity to share experiences in the first year of operation and discuss some of the important issues that have arisen. Workshop sessions will be specifically tailored for monitoring officers, Members of Standards Committees and Parish Councils.

Members of the Committee may also wish to consider attendance at this Workshop (subject, of course, to availability once the actual date is confirmed).

(ii) New Councillors

All out elections for the City Council will be held on 1 May 2003, out of which it can be anticipated that some people may be elected as Councillor for the first time (or since the introduction of the new National Code, Political Conventions, etc.). Such newly Elected Members will have specific training and associated needs in the area of probity and standards. These can be summarised as follows:-

(a) Ever Thought of Becoming a Leicester City Councillor

A briefing session for persons interested in becoming a Councillor was held on 15 October 2002. This included a session, led by the Town Clerk, on Ethics and Probity, thereby stressing, right from the very first expressions of interest by prospective candidates, of both the legislative position and also the importance placed within the Council on maintaining the highest standards of conduct and probity.

(b) Election Candidate Information Packs and Candidate Briefings

As part of the Information Packs prepared locally for Election Candidates, all persons considering standing for Council receive, as part of their information pack, a copy of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office they will be required to sign, a copy of the National Code of Conduct and a Summary of the Council's Political Conventions.

It is recommended that this practice continue, supplemented by a specific reference to standards and probity at the associated Candidates Briefing Session.

(c) Declaration of Acceptance of Office

A person elected to the office of Councillor must positively accept office by making a declaration of acceptance of that office in a form and manner prescribed by the Secretary of State. Failure to so accept within two months leads to the office becoming automatically vacant. To avoid any such dangers this task has, in Leicester, been traditionally undertaken immediately after the declaration of result. This practice could continue or it could be encompassed into the induction process – notably regarding ethics and probity – thereby ensuring attendance at such a session by all Members.

(d) Induction Workshop

A comprehensive induction programme is being planned for all newly elected Councillors. As part of this programme, it is recommended that a Workshop be run to fulfil two objectives:-

- ✧ To provide information and guidance on probity and standards, including guidance on the Political Conventions, incorporating the National Code, as locally adapted.
- ✧ Completion of the Forms associated with the Declaration of Members Interests – with practical assistance and guidance for Members on completing their Declaration form.

(iii) All Councillors – Training and Development

Arrangements are currently being put in place whereby the training and development needs of each Councillor can be both identified and, thereafter, addressed. As part of that process, it is recognised that there will be a number of core elements applicable to all Members, e.g. health and safety, the Council's decision-making processes, etc. Issues of ethics and probity would properly be part of that list.

It is recommended that appropriate training on probity and standards – in all probability in a workshop format – be provided for all Members.

In addition, the existing annual provision of training for those Members who sit on the Regulatory and Development Control Sub-Committees must also be maintained, to conform with both Government guidance and best practice.

(iv) Co-optees

The Local Government Act 2000 now embraces co-optees, and notably those co-optees with voting rights, into the probity and standards framework.

Whilst numerous of the issues are in common with all Councillors, nevertheless, co-optees cannot be expected to have the overview of local government activities that may perhaps be expected of Elected Members. It is, therefore, proposed that there be a specific training package targeted at co-opted members.

(v) Officers

The Consultation Draft of the Officers Code of Conduct is still awaited. However, when introduced, in its final form, there will need to be comprehensive training of officers throughout the authority on the provisions of the new Code.

In addition, whilst one round of training has been undertaken, there is an ongoing need to provide training for officers on the Political Conventions including also the practical aspects of the officer/Member interface, as contained within the Conventions. A further programme of such training needs to be provided for all departments. The views of Members of the Standards Committee concerning an input by them into this training process would also be welcomed.

(vi) Partnership Working with the Council (including Appointments to Outside Bodies)

The extent of partnership working by a whole range of agencies with the Council continues to grow. Also, Members and officers are appointed as Council representatives on a range of outside bodies.

The potential for probity issues has been recognised by the production of the Council's Probity Rules for Partnerships. However, the topic of partnership working remains a very dynamic area and one which needs some refreshment. Similarly, appointments to a range of outside bodies by both Members and

officers can lead to complexities and the need for clarity of roles and responsibilities. It is, therefore, recommended that appropriate training also be established, targeted specifically at those officers and Members involved in partnership working or who are appointed as Council representatives on outside bodies.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

1. Financial Implications

The provision of the training and development programme will be achieved through a mixture of external opportunities and in-house provision. The costs, however, can be contained within existing budgetary provision.

2. Legal Implications

Legislation, notably the Local Government Act 1972 and Local Government Act 2000, imposes a number of requirements on Elected Members, including voting co-optees and officers in relation to matters of ethics and probity. This report seeks to ensure that all those so affected receive sufficient training to enable them to fulfil their legal obligations.

3. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	Yes	In providing training to the required standards, account will be taken of the diverse needs of Members and officers to ensure that all undertaking the training can do so to maximum benefit.	
Policy	No		
Sustainable and Environmental	No		
Crime and Disorder	No		
Human Rights Act	Yes	Human Rights implications will form an integral part of the training.	
Elderly/People on Low Income	No		

4. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

None.

5. Consultations

None.

6. Report Author

Charles Poole
Service Director (Democratic Services
extn. 7015