

CESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of meeting: 8 July 2008
Report of: The Governance Group
Title: Promotion of High Standards of Ethical Behaviour

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To identify what initial steps to take in terms of the promotion of high standards within Cheshire East Shadow Authority and the associated training and awareness requirements.

2. Decision Required

- 2.1 To ask the Governance Group to offer detailed sessions on the Code of Conduct for all Cheshire East Councillors.
- 2.2 To identify the Committees own training requirements.

3. Information

- 3.1 One of the main roles of the Committee is to promote high standards of conduct throughout the Shadow Council.
- 3.2 At the member induction day in May 2008, a presentation was made on the Code of Conduct and its requirements.
- 3.3 The membership of the Shadow Council includes Councillors who have a full working knowledge of the Code of Conduct and the standards regime by virtue of their being Councillors on existing authorities. Their level of awareness may be considered to be sufficiently high to enable them to operate effectively.
- 3.4 Equally, there are Councillors who are new to this regime or have limited experience by virtue of being elected relatively recently on their existing authorities. Their level of awareness will have been improved by the induction day session, but this group of Councillors may welcome the offer of a more detailed session on the Code and the Standards regime surrounding it.
- 3.5 It is suggested that in order to address this issue, more detailed sessions be offered to all Cheshire East Councillors. Attendance would be voluntary. To encourage attendance, a variety of sessions could be offered on different days at different times and at different venues. It is suggested that these sessions are also made open to Cheshire West and Chester Councillors.

- 3.6 Once these sessions have been run, the Committee can then consider what further training and awareness should be provided. An issue to resolve will be whether attendance at standards related events should be voluntary, or if the Committee would wish to take a more directive approach.

4. Training and Awareness for Standards Committee Members

- 4.1 It will be important for the Standards Committee members to be fully conversant with their role on the Committee. This is especially so when it comes to dealing with complaints (the assessment process) conducting a hearing into allegations, and being able to review decisions not to conduct an investigation where an appeal is made.
- 4.2 The Cheshire Authorities event “Administering the Code of Conduct” held in Crewe on 20 June 2008 provided an early opportunity to gain an appreciation of the whole standards regime.
- 4.3 It will be the full Standards Committee that will require training and awareness, so it is suggested that further work on this area is concentrated in that time when all Independent and Parish representatives have been appointed to the Committee.
- 4.4 If complaints come to this committee before programmed training has been provided, then it is recommended training is provided immediately before matters have to be dealt with.
- 4.5 Another valuable training opportunity is the Standards Board for England’s Annual Meeting in Birmingham. This event has proven to be extremely useful in past years as a way of raising awareness and identifying best practice.
- 4.6 It is understood that this year’s event is probably fully booked, but places at the event may be made available by the existing authorities. It runs on 13 and 14 of October. Any expressions of interest in attending this event would be welcomed.
- 4.7 At this stage of the work of the committee, members are asked to identify:-
- (a) Any of their own training requirements
 - (b) Any suggestions for promoting standards within Cheshire East.
- 4.8 These suggestions can then be worked on and reported at the next meeting of the Committee.

5. Financial Implications for Transition Costs

- 5.1 Any training requirements will be met by officers of the three current authorities wherever possible.

6. Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond

- 6.1 Training, awareness and the promotion of high standards will require some budgetary provision.

7. **Legal Implications**

There are no direct legal implications.

8. **Risk Assessment**

- 8.1 Communicating effectively on the Code of Conduct and Standards issues generally fulfils the Committees remit in its term of reference to promote high standards and should go towards minimising the work of the Committee in dealing with complaints.

9. **Overview of Day One, Year One and Term One Issues**

- 9.1 The Standards Committee will need to be able to conduct assessments of complaints, hearings and review committees as soon as possible in this year on a Shadow Authority. From 1 April 2009, it will need to fulfil its role in respect of the 107 Parish Councils as well.

For further information:

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Background Documents:

N/A