

CHESHIRE EAST STANDARDS COMMITTEE
18TH MAY 2009

PILOT COMPACT

INTRODUCTION

At its meeting in July 2008, the Macclesfield Standards Committee considered a report which gave details of central government funding provided for capacity building initiatives in respect of parish and town councils. This comprised two programmes: (1) A pilot peer-mentoring programme for Parish and Town Councillors, and (2) a pilot to implement a Model Compact between County Associations and Standards Committees of principal authorities. It was this second proposal which Macclesfield Standards Committee agreed to take forward. In the West of the county, Chester City Council and Vale Royal Borough Council took similar steps.

The project was intended to run from August 2008-February 2009 and the outcome of the project would be evaluated by the Standards Board for England.

The report appended below was submitted to the Macclesfield Standards Committee at its meeting held on 16th March 2009. This followed several earlier reports and liaison between the Committee and ChALC (Cheshire Association of Local Councils) to determine the scope of the agreed compact. On 16 March the Standards Committee approved the 13 recommendations proposed by ChALC, but recognising that a decision upon the future of the project would need to be made by Cheshire East, resolved that the recommendations be placed before Cheshire East's Standards Committee. Accordingly the Committee is invited to consider its view on the future of the project.

MACCLESFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL STANDARDS COMMITTEE

16 MARCH 2009

PILOT COMPACT BETWEEN THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE AND THE CHESHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (ChALC)

SPECIFIC WARDS AFFECTED

All

EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

No

1 DECISION REQUESTED

- 1.1 To note progress on the Pilot Compact.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members considered update reports on 11 September and 11 November on this matter, and has established a sub committee, which has met informally on one occasion, to take it forward.
- 2.2 It was reported in November that a questionnaire had been sent by ChALC to participants from all authorities, following which Jackie Weaver, ChALC's Chief Officer, had considered the responses. That had led to the compilation of documents summarising the responses, and making recommendations for inclusion into the Cheshire Code of Conduct Compact. The documents from ChALC were appended to the report and Standards Committee discussed and formulated detailed responses to the list of 13 recommendations, which were then forwarded to ChALC.
- 2.3 Attached as Appendix One to the report is the latest version of the Compact.
- 2.4 Out of the 13 recommendations put forward by the Standards Committee ChALC accepted all bar the following three -
- (i) Recommendation 1-This should be amended to include representatives of the Executive Committee of the Association as well as the Chief Officer to be included in the circulation list.
 - (ii) Recommendation 12-This should be amended to state that proposals for a mentoring programme be placed on hold for a year.
 - (iii) Recommendation 13-This should be amended to state that the Principal Authority supports the recommendations put forward by ChALC as it sees appropriate.

3 RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPOSED DECISION

No significant risk is identified in respect of any decision which the Committee might reach.

4 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

LGR	-	The work undertaken on Compact can be taken forward once Cheshire East fully takes over standards functions.
Financial	-	None.
Staffing	-	None.
Legal	-	None.
Assets	-	None.
Policy	-	None.
Equality	-	None.
Crime and Disorder	-	None.
Other	-	None.

5 APPENDICES

Appendix One-Code of Conduct Compact for Cheshire Councils.

Monitoring Officer Julie Openshaw Tel Ext No: 4250

The Contact Officer for this report is Julie Openshaw Tel Ext No: 4250

TRACKING/PROCESS:

Consultation	Ward Members	Partners	Standards Committee
			11 September 2008 11 November 2008 19 January 2009 16 March 2009
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following list of documents was used to complete this report and are available for public inspection for four years from the date of the meeting from the Contact Officer named above.

None.

Code of Conduct Compact for CHESHIRE Councils

*Developed in Partnership
with the Standards Committees of
Chester, Macclesfield and Vale Royal*

Background

Using Central Government funding aimed at providing capacity building initiatives for the parish councils, the Standards Committees and Monitoring Officers of Chester City, Macclesfield and Vale Royal and the Cheshire Association of Local Councils worked together to produce a compact to reflect the working arrangements between the parties and seeking to promote best practice in the support of, and engagement with, the Town and Parish Councils in Cheshire. It is envisaged that the lessons learned and the good practice developed will transfer across to the newly created Authorities of Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester in due course. The compact will be shared with other County Associations so they can benefit from the pilot.

Objectives

The key objectives of the compact are:

- 1 To gain improvements in governance at parish council level;*
- 2 To reduce incidence of governance failure and relationship breakdown within parish councils;*
- 3 To improve understanding of the application of the Code of Conduct in parish councils;*
- 4 To establish good practice;*
- 5 To contribute towards the development of new parish councils and confidence in local democracy*

Partners

Throughout the development of the Compact the following organisations and individuals have been supportive and taken part in forming the consultation, development and implementation of the Compact.

NALC	-	Meera Tharmarajah, Head of Legal Services
ChALC	-	Jackie Weaver, Chief Officer
Chester City Council	-	Charles Kerry, Monitoring Officer
		Jack McGarva, Standards Committee
Chairman		Hilary McNae, Standards Committee
Member		
Parishes	-	Upton by Chester Parish Council
		Great Boughton Parish Council
Macclesfield Borough Council	-	Rosemary Lyon, Acting Monitoring Officer
		Ian Clark, Standards Committee Chairman
Parishes		Poynton with Worth Parish Council
		Bollington Town Council

Vale Royal Borough Council

- Margaret Ingram, Acting Monitoring Officer
Frank Thomas, Standards Committee Member

Parishes

- Winsford Town Council
Northwich Town Council

The Agreement

- 1** *To improve the relationship between the Standards Committee and the Cheshire Association, the Chief Officer will be included in the circulation list for Agendas and Minutes of the Standards Committee and will be invited to attend regular Standards Committee meetings no less frequently than twice per year.*
- 2** *To develop the relationship between the Standards Committee and the Town and Parish Councils the Standards Committee will arrange a Parish Conference no less frequently than annually to update the Parish Clerks and Members on the work of the Standards Committee; and*
- 3** *The Chairman of the Standards Committee will be invited to attend the Annual Meeting of the Cheshire Association of Local Councils to address the Town and Parish Council Members on matters of concern or interest to the Standards Committee.*
- 4** *The Standards Committee will draft an annual bulletin highlighting issues of interest or concern and circulate it to the Town and Parish Councils through the e-bulletin network of the Cheshire Association of Local Councils. Where appropriate, significant issues/outcomes from the Standards Committee may be circulated in a timely manner.*
- 5** *The Monitoring Officer will write to the Town and Parish Clerks in March/April to remind them of the requirements for newly elected or returned members and to advise them of the support that is provided by the Monitoring Officer and how to access that support. In addition a further letter will be compiled and circulated to Town and Parish Councillors outlining the support offered by the Monitoring Officer to them; and*
- 6** *The Monitoring Officer will copy the ChALC in on such correspondence and signpost ChALC as a means of additional support for those Town and Parish Councils.*
- 7** *The Standards Committee will recognise ChALC as the means by which it will recruit Parish Members and that a protocol for the recruitment of those members will be developed between the Standards Committee and ChALC.*
- 8** *The Standards Committee will catalogue available information in a format that Clerks and Councillors can access directly, either upon request or via a link on the Principal Authority website. This catalogue should include: guidance; case studies; link to the Standards Board website; training opportunities; forms and contact information.*
- 9** *A training programme should be developed in partnership between the Monitoring Officers, ChALC and the Society of Local Council Clerks to address the specific needs of both members and officers in Town and Parish Councils.*
- 10** *A training register should be kept by each Clerk showing the Code of Conduct training that has been accessed by the Clerk and members.*
- 11** *A 'hot-spot' training session should be developed for roll out to any Town or Parish Council experiencing high levels of complaint or where the Standards Committee has identified special need.*

- 12** *A mentoring programme should be developed consisting of knowledgeable Town or Parish Council members and Clerks who are supported in working with Parish Councils to avoid potential complaints.*
- 13** *The Monitoring Officers should seek to encourage the use of budgetary resources to support ChALC in delivering the recommendations contained in the Compact, recognising the important role they play in providing an interface between the Standards Committees and the Town and Parish Councils.*