

**REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE PILOT MODEL COMPACT WORKING GROUP ("the Group") held at the Municipal Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2009 at 10.30a.m.**

**Present:** David Sayer (Chair for the meeting), Nigel Briers, Teresa Eatough, Councillor Lesley Smetham, Chris Chapman (Monitoring Officer) and Jackie Weaver (Chief Executive Officer Cheshire Association of Local Councils) (ChALC)

**Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Ken Edwards and Councillor John Goddard

**Introduction**

The Chair welcomed Jackie Weaver (JW) and reminded the Group that JW had been unable to attend the meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 2009 and that in readiness for today's meeting JW and members had been supplied with a list of questions upon which the views of JW would be sought ( a list of such questions is attached and marked Appendix 1). Chris Chapman (CC) advised that following discussions with the Council Leader and Chief Executive the consensus view was, in general terms, supportive of the efforts made by the Standards Committee and the Group to establish a joint system of working with ChALC.

In response JW spoke of ChALC's track record of working with district and parish councils addressing their individual requirements including the Code of Conduct with a view to establishing levels of consistency. In answer to a question from Councillor Smetham (LS) JW confirmed that ChALC did work with councils who are not members of ChALC. The Group then considered the questions listed at Appendix 1 and the issues raised thereby.

**Question 1.**

JW approached this question from two aspects i.e. (1) training already in place e.g. via the County Training Partnership (CTP) which presently takes account of the Code of Conduct and provides both induction and refresher training on approximately six occasions in each year. The role of the Monitoring Officer was referred to and expressed to be likely to be restricted to one of review and signing off the training involved. CC reminded the Group that Cheshire East would be unlikely to fund any contribution to CTP but representation by way of member(s) nominated to serve on CTP could be favourably considered.

JW and CC agreed that the matter discussed thus far represented but one element of the training issue. The second aspect (2) addressed additional and/or specific ("Hot Spot") training and this took account of the statutory duty of Cheshire East acting by the Monitoring Officer to provide training for parish/town council on one (at least) and possibly two occasions in each year which would include not only members but Chairs and Parish

Clerks alike. JW expressed confidence that that such additional training could be achieved by the resources presently available with ChALC, working whenever possible on a one to one basis with the Monitoring Officer and being seen more as a support mechanism rather than as an overseer.

The main thrust of what turned out to be a lengthy discussion was to establish the principle of the Standards Committee and ChALC working together. After dealing with certain ancillary questions JW agreed to provide written costings addressing (a) the cost implications of signing up to CTP and (b) modular pricing of additional training under the second arm of JW's approach. Such information, JW confirmed, could be available within a time scale of approximately 14 days or earlier.

## **Question 2**

JW confirmed that, in general, each parish/town council will fund induction training whereas additional, modular or "Hot Spot" training usually being a requirement of the district council would accordingly be funded by the district council. In response to question from Teresa Eatough (TE) JW confirmed that 80% of parish/town councils subscribe to ChALC and that charges were higher for non members.

## **Question 3**

TE had raised this matter at the Group meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2009. JW advised that, in her view, it is not the responsibility of the Parish/Town Council Clerk to offer advice to members – it being the duty and responsibility of each member to be aware of the requirements of the law in general and the Code of Conduct in particular. JW emphasised the weight of this requirement in terms of both elected and co-opted members. LS commented that this discussion had served to highlight the very different ways in which parish/town councils work.

## **Question 4**

In response to this JW stated that ChALC sought to reach as wide an audience as possible and not restricted to simply the Code of Conduct but also the wider aspects of personal responsibility within local governance.

## **Question 5**

The extensive debate which arose on the issues raised in question 1 and JW's agreement at the conclusion to communicate costings in writing precluded any further discussion on the question.

## **Question 6**

In response JW restated ChALC's seven years experience working with parish and district councils, liaising with respective monitoring officers and the comprehensive training programs evolved. JW, in answer to a question from CC, confirmed that she and her assistant would actively undertake work within the programs.

**Conclusion**

The Chair, on behalf of the Group, thanked JW for her attendance and much appreciated input.

**Next Meeting**

The Group agreed to meet again on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2009 immediately following the meeting of the full Standards Committee on that date convened for 10.30a.m.

The meeting concluded at 11.45a.m

27<sup>th</sup> August 2009