

**REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE PILOT MODEL COMPACT  
WORKING GROUP ("the Group")  
held at the Council Offices Westfields, Sandbach on  
Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2009 at 2.00 p.m**

Present: David Sayer (Chair for the meeting), Nigel Briers, Teresa Eatough, Ken Edwards, Councillor Lesley Smetham, Councillor John Goddard, Councillor John Hammond, Patsy Barnett and Chris Chapman (Monitoring Officer)

## **Introduction**

The Chair reminded the Group that at the meeting of the Group held on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 2009 Jackie Weaver (JW) Chief Executive of Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC) had agreed to submit in writing her responses to questions raised on that occasion and that JW had duly responded by way of the document now circulated to the Group and entitled "Issues and Ideas Paper - Cheshire East Standards Committee - 4<sup>th</sup> September 2009". A copy of this document is annexed to this report and marked 'Appendix A'.

The Chair stated that it was the original intention that JW should attend today's meeting but that was not possible due to her admission to hospital following which it was reported that JW is recuperating and will hopefully be resuming her duties late November early December. *[Chair undertook to convey to JW the best wishes of the Group for a speedy recovery]*

The Group then proceeded to consider the form and content of Appendix 'A' adopting the numeration 1 to 13 inclusive as set out in Appendix 'A' for the purpose of recording comments and suggestions which are collectively referred to as 'Responses':-

### **1. 'Improving Relationships'**

In response to the suggestion that Chalc be included on the circulation list for Standards bearing in mind the current postal difficulties and administrative costs the Group felt this could be met by Chalc being included on email listings for the Standards Committee. Following that attendance at meetings by Chalc could be achieved on an ad hoc basis when items of interest/relevance arose with proper notice to the Monitoring Officer.

### **2. 'Developing Relationships'**

The Group registered approval in principle to the 'Parish Conference' idea with the details to be discussed further with Chalc.

### **3. ChALC Annual Meeting**

This was agreed with the proviso that the invitation to attend ChALC Annual Meeting could be extended to other members of the Standards Committee.

#### **4. Annual Bulletin**

The Group felt that this requirement could be met initially by inclusion of Chalco in circulation of the Annual Report of the Standards Committee. It was not felt that a commitment to a bi-monthly bulletin could be made at this stage given budgetary and resource limitations presently obtaining. The current information leaflets to be made available to Chalco with sufficient copies for distribution to Parish/Town Council Clerks and members.

#### **5. Newly Elected (Parish) Members**

The Monitoring Officer indicated that he was content that Local Council Clerks should be reminded of the requirements for newly elected members at the same time advising them of support mechanisms in place. The Monitoring Officer also reported briefly on the Milton Keynes Experiment and the availability of the 'the Parish Tool Kit'.

#### **6. Copy Correspondence**

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that there would be no objection to copying the correspondence referred to in 5 above to Chalco.

#### **7. Recruitment of Parish Members**

The Group confirmed that it was happy for this question to be further discussed with ChALC.

#### **8. Available Information/Access to Website**

Prior to commencement of today's meeting it had been confirmed that an entry detailing matters relevant to Standards on the website of Cheshire East was presently in course of preparation and could accordingly be identified as 'a work in hand'.

#### **9. Training Programme**

The Monitoring Officer confirmed his statutory obligation to provide at least one training session for Local Council Clerks and Members annually but, with reluctance, pointed out that budgetary constraints precluded any firm commitment at this stage to a further extension of the programme. The position was not eased, the Monitoring Officer pointed out, by the heavy demands on staff and resources at the present time. The Group noted that ChALC already undertakes training and Cheshire East is supportive of the role played by ChALC in the training of Local Council Clerks and members.

#### **10. Training Register**

This was agreed.

#### **11. 'Hot Spot' Training**

This was agreed in principle on the basis that each case (if any) would be looked at individually given the problem(s) obtaining within a particular Parish or Town Council and a programme would be tailored to meet those particular needs in accordance with the specific suggestions set out in Appendix 'A'. The Group considered the proposed costings as set out in

Appendix 'A' appropriate to Special Measures Programmes and these again, in principle, were considered to be reasonable and realistic

## **12. Mentoring**

Appendix 'A' did not appear to address this question (or at least it was missing from the copies circulated) and as a consequence discussion was restricted to issues of principle and it was generally agreed that to maintain a list of Local Council Clerks and Members of experience and repute who would be willing to advise and assist members seeking guidance would be of benefit to all concerned in local governance at Town and Parish Council level.

## **13. Budgetary Resources**

The Monitoring Officer reaffirmed his earlier statements in response to specific issues e.g. training regarding the extent to which the Principal Authority, whilst supporting the role and significance of Chalc in attaining and maintaining high standards of governance, must have regard to the level of demand on budgetary resources. Subject to this caveat the principle set out in the concluding Compact Objective is accepted.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion the Group agreed that it would next meet at the conclusion of 'the Away Day' fixed for 11<sup>th</sup> December 2009 and in the meantime the Chair was deputed to advise Chalc of the outcome of today's discussions and specifically to disclose the responses of the Group to Compact Objectives 1 to 13 inclusive and thereafter to meet with JW (or such other representative of Chalc as may be nominated in her continued absence) with a view to ratifying the final draft of the proposed compact. This meeting to be arranged on a date to be fixed in company with the Monitoring Officer at the offices of Cheshire East at Westfields Sandbach.

The meeting concluded at 3.30 p.m

29<sup>th</sup> October 2009