

Issues and Ideas Paper - Cheshire East Standards Committee

4th September 2009

INTRODUCTION

Following the meeting on the 27th August of the Standards Committee Model Compact Working Group, Jackie Weaver (Chief Officer ChALC) was asked to prepare a response to a number of questions raised and to draft a proposal for support for parish council training in Cheshire East.

The Model Compact sets out a number of areas of working and best practice which the Standards Committee has tacitly approved. Identified below is a table which identifies the actions that may achieve the desired outcomes and the cost implications.

The Model Compact Agreement

	Compact Objective	Action Required	Cost
1	<i>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.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding ChALC to the circulation list for the meeting papers for each Standards Committee for information (acknowledging that it would be inappropriate for confidential material to be circulated); Inviting ChALC to attend regular Standards Committee meetings and, where appropriate, speak on matters of relevance to Local Councils. 	Nil
2	<i>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</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cheshire East may already have plans to hold a 'Parish Conference' of sorts as was previously held by the District/County Councils. If so the Standards Committee could take an active role in the proceedings which would dramatically reduce the overall cost. 	tbc
3	<i>The Standards Committee Chairman will be invited to attend the Annual Meeting of the ChALC to address the Local Council Members on matters of concern or interest to the Standards Committee.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ChALC hold an annual meeting and would be pleased to extend invitations to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Standards Committee to attend and if appropriate, speak. 	Nil
4	<i>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</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ChALC will ensure that general information or regular updates the Standards Committee and/or Monitoring Officer wish to circulate to Local Councils is distributed by e-mail and where appropriate, signposted in the bi-monthly newsletter. This may be used to support the material also being sent out by Cheshire East to ensure the widest 	Nil



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	<i>circulated in a timely manner.</i>	possible audience.	
5	<i>The Monitoring Officer will write to the Local Council 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 Local Councillors outlining the support offered by the Monitoring Officer; and</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular reminders to be sent to Parish Clerks advising them of what the Monitoring Officer requires from them and reminding them of the support available for Code of Conduct Issues from the Standards Board and Cheshire East. 	tbc
6	<i>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.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ChALC is a regular point of contact for both member and non-member Local Councils so it is helpful to make them aware of what is being sent to Local Councils. 	Nil
7	<i>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.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ChALC has previously facilitated the election of the Parish Members by the Local Councils themselves and may be charged with so doing in the future. The procedure itself may be agreed between the Standards Committee and ChALC. 	Nil
8	<i>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.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an increasing demand for information to be made available from a central location and web based solutions are often seen as cost effective. A Cheshire East Web Area would be a valuable tool for accessing general Code of Conduct information for Clerks and Members of Local Councils. 	tbc
9	<i>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.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For details - see below 	
10	<i>A training register should be kept by each Clerk showing the Code of Conduct training that has been accessed by the Clerk and members.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each Clerk should be requested to keep this information and, if required, submit it to the Monitoring Officer. 	Nil

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11	<i>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.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For details - see below 	
12	<i>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.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For details - see below 	
13	<i>The Monitoring Officer 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.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When Cheshire East seeks to deliver support to Local Councils in Code of Conduct issues it should consider delivery through ChALC as an option. 	tbc

Training Programme

There was general recognition that a 'one size fits all' training offer would not meet the requirements of the Committee; Monitoring Officer or Local Councils themselves. To that end a number of opportunities were identified:

Regular Update Sessions Integration of Code of Conduct into the existing training modules of the County Training Partnership so that CoC becomes a natural part of the knowledge necessary for a new councillor or clerk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing and updating of the Roles and Responsibilities and Chairmanship 2 - Professional Conduct Modules of the Training Programme MO to draft programme of what should be included as a basic 20 minute introduction and a 10 minute mini-module on the Chairman's responsibilities 	Officer time from both Monitoring Officer and ChALC Chief Officer
Hot-Spot or Special Measures Programme Formal 2 hour Code of Conduct Training Session covering all aspects of the CoC relevant to Local Councils that can be delivered to a number of interested individuals from a variety of Local Councils or which can be specifically delivered to a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of the existing training programme developed to advise Local Councils of their duties and responsibilities under the latest CoC. Development of handouts to enable those attending the sessions to have documentation to refer back to if necessary 	2 Days 2 Days <u>Total: £600</u>



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Council that has had a number of complaints or which the MO believe would benefit from that level of support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery - where commissioned by MO for an individual Council • Delivery - where attended by an individual to be paid for by the Local Council or by agreement by MO 	£100 per session £30 per session
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The breakdown above envisages that the training costs will be taken up by both the Principal Authority and individual Local Councils.

Cheshire East may consider funding the original development work that needs to be undertaken and may consider funding this in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester for whom the issues will be similar. The cost for the development work would be in the region of £600.

Individual Local Councils would have the opportunity to 'buy into' the CoC module as they can with all other modules in the Training Programme where they felt it would be to their advantage or was part of their member development programme.

The Standards Committee may use training as a 'sanction' following an investigation and at that point may consider it appropriate to pay for the training to be delivered to a single Local Council en bloc. The cost for such a Council session would be £100. *(please note - this delivery of a training module to a single Local Council is priced at well below the current rate for training delivery through the County Training Partnership - the usual charge would be £250 - but this is priced to encourage its use).*

Should the Standards Committee or MO require the module to be delivered to a wider group of individuals then this could be accomplished at a charge of £10 per person *(please note - the current charge for a 2 hour County Training Partnership session is £30 (£40 for non-members of ChALC, SLCC and CCA) - again priced to encourage use).*

As a final comment, it is important that CoC training is accessible both in terms of cost and delivery but ChALC also has a responsibility to the County Training Partnership and cannot 'undercut' training provision through that partnership. The costings above take account of this and the cost of an ad hoc session commissioned by the MO, Standards Committee or individual Local Council will be at the standard rate of the CTP - i.e. £30. However, where the MO or Standards Committee commissions delivery to a targeted audience or to a wider group the discounted rate will apply.