

# Item 8

## REPORT TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

5<sup>th</sup> April 2007

## REPORT OF SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL AND MONITORING OFFICER

### INDUCTION PROCEDURE FOR NEWLY ELECTED/CO-OPTED MEMBERS: MAY ELECTIONS 2007

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the induction procedure for elected Members after the May elections in relation to Standards and Ethics.
- 1.2 Members will receive a Standards and Ethics Handbook and will be invited to attend a post election training session delivered by the Monitoring Officer. Training on standards will continue throughout the year; there are a further two standards training events planned for 2007.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Standards Committee be appraised of the report.
- 2.2 To note the induction procedure for appointed Members after the May elections.

#### 3. DETAIL

- 3.1 It is important that new Members receive a thorough induction, existing Members may also feel they would like to refresh their knowledge of the organisation and its work given the substantial changes that have occurred in local government over recent years.
- 3.2 In a survey carried out by the Local Government Research Consortium there was strong support for a Member induction with an overwhelming (92%) stating it was very important for newly elected Councillors to be given comprehensive information about their roles and the powers and responsibilities of local government.
- 3.3 The public have a right to expect the highest standards of behaviour from elected Members. Confidence in local democracy is essential to an open and inclusive society. This can only be achieved when those serving their communities adhere to and can be held accountable for the high standards expected of them. The induction process has been designed to focus on the key areas of the ethical environment and regular training events will ensure that Members are updated on the law and procedure.

- 3.4 **Member Handbook:** Members will receive a Standards and Ethics Handbook after appointment (attached at Appendix 1). The Member Handbook contains guidance on standards and ethics and what Members must do to comply with the Code of Conduct. For newly elected Members it gives an insight into the ethical environment. It outlines the key areas that Members should be aware of, for example the role of the Monitoring Officer, local investigations into Member misconduct and training requirements. More importantly, it provides a list of key websites and contact points for advice. A copy of the handbook has been placed on our web site [www.sedgefield.gov.uk](http://www.sedgefield.gov.uk) under the legal services, standards and ethics link.
- 3.5 The Handbook will be distributed to Parish and Town Clerks, who will be asked to make appropriate copies available to their Members. Letters will be sent to Clerks outlining what will be required of them following the elections.
- 3.6 **Post Election Training Session:** The post election training session will be a general introduction to standards and ethics and will introduce new Members to the Code of Conduct and areas of importance concentrating on matters such as the declaration of interests and Member conduct. The training session will be delivered by the Monitoring Officer and held in the Council Chamber on 10<sup>th</sup> May between 10.00a.m and 11.00a.m.
- 3.7 **Training Events:** A training event on standards issues presented by Peter Keith Lucas of Bevan, Brittan Solicitors is planned to run on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2007. Peter speaks widely at a national level on standards issues, and is a frequent speaker at the Local Government Group Weekend School.
- 3.8 The event will provide the opportunity for discussion on problem areas of the Code; how complaints arise, how they are dealt with; the pre-hearing process etc. The event is aimed at Members of Local Authority Standards Committees, Monitoring Officers and their Deputies and Town and Parish Clerks and their Members.
- 3.9 In the autumn of 2007, training sessions, delivered by the Council's Monitoring Officer will be held focusing on the ethical environment and the Code of Conduct. Further details to be confirmed.
- 3.10 Following the elections, letters will be sent to Members providing general information on the Member Handbook, what forms to fill out, the post election training session and future training events detailing dates and times.

#### 4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 No specific financial implications have been identified.

## 5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 The Council's Management Team has considered this report.

## 6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 All material considerations have been taken into account in the contents of this report. In particular, risks may arise unless Members of Council are fully appraised on standards matters.

## 7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None apply.

## 8. LIST OF APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1 – Member Handbook

**Contact Officer:** Dennis A. Hall/Laura Starrs  
**Telephone Number:** 01388 816166, Ext. 4268  
**E-mail address:** dahall@sedgefield.gov.uk

**Wards:** N/A

**Key Decision Validation:** N/A

### Background Papers

Standards Board Website

### Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Council's Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Council's S.151 Officer or his representative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

