

Title of Report : CODE OF CONDUCT AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS

Report of : Head of Legal and Democratic Services

To : Standards Committee

Date : 7th September 2007

Item No : 6

Purpose of report : To update the Committee on training of members on the new Members' Code of Conduct and on the registration by members of their interests as required by the new Code of Conduct.

Recommendation(s) : To consider whether to make any observations or issue any advice upon Code training and on registration of interests, and otherwise to note the contents of the report.

Key decision : No

Portfolio Holder : Not applicable

Scrutiny Responsibility : Not applicable

Ward(s) affected : All

Report Approved by : Lindsay Cane (Legal Services)

Policy Framework : Not applicable

1. Code Adoption

- 1.1 Council adopted the new Members' Code of Conduct on 25th June 2007 and set 1st July 2007 as the date for it to come into effect.
- 1.2 When members of the City Council are newly elected or re-elected to the Council they have to sign a declaration of acceptance of office that requires them to undertake to observe the Code of Conduct that is expected of members of the Council. In common with other local authorities we have taken the view that members do not need specifically to sign to undertake to observe the new Code of Conduct. The declaration required immediately after election covers the Code for the time being in force.

2. Completion of Register of Members' Interests

- 2.1 As a result of the adoption of the new Code, members need to complete a new Register of Interests. This is necessary because the range of interests is different to those required to be registered by the old Code (and the new Code requires a new registration to be completed in any case). 28 days are allowed for in the Code between it being applied by the local authority and completion of the new register. Completion of the new register applies to co-opted members as much as it does to elected members. All City councillors and co-opted members have now completed a new Register of Interests under the new Code.

3. Code Training

- 3.1 We have conducted eight Code training sessions. Two more are planned, one on 3rd September and one on 24th September. To date we have trained over 100 people comprising members of staff, parish councillors, the Chair of the Standards Committee and members of Council. By the end of the current planned round of training sessions we will have trained the majority of City Councillors. However, seven members may by then not have attended training sessions.
- 3.2 It is particularly important for members to attend a training session on the new Code. It is not altogether easy of interpretation without the benefit of training. When and if complaints are received that members have breached the Code, one of the standard questions asked by the Standards Board is "has the member been offered and attended Code training?".

4. Parish Councils

- 4.1 Adoption of the Code and completion of a new Register of Interests applies to parish councils and parish councillors. At the time of finalisation of the agenda for this meeting of the Standards Committee, we have had notification that two of our four parish councils have adopted the new Code. Of the other two, one will deal with the matter in September. The Clerk to the remaining parish council is seeking instructions from the Chair of the Council. All local authorities have 6 months to adopt the new Code from the date of the making of the Code Statutory Instrument by the Government.
- 4.2 Not all of the parish councillors for the two parish councils that have adopted the Code have yet completed the new Register of Interests. We are taking this up directly with the Clerks to the parish councils.

- 4.3 A number of parish councillors have attended our Code training sessions. The Monitoring Officer and the Democratic Services Manager are arranging Code training for Littlemore Parish Council and Risinghurst and Sandhills Parish Council at one of their meetings.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 All City councillors have registered their interests under the new Code. Not all parish councillors have yet completed a new Register of Interests form. This is of concern. An oral update will be made at the meeting.
- 5.2 Not all City councillors have yet attended a Code training session. Attendance, whilst not compulsory, is of importance. At the end of the month we will send to any members who have not attended a training session all of the material that we have presented at the training.
- 5.3 Unless the Committee wishes to make any observations or issue any guidance upon Code training and registration of interests, it is asked to note the contents of this report.

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Background Papers : None