

**TITLE** Update on Training

**FOR CONSIDERATION BY** Standards Committee on 24 October 2022

**WARD** (All Wards);

**LEAD OFFICER** Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

**OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

To provide assurance of high standards of ethical conduct and behaviour.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the committee agrees the individual and collective training and development needs of its members through the remainder of this municipal year and 2023/24.

**SUMMARY OF REPORT**

With the new Member Code of Conduct in place and associated revisions to the way complaints are dealt, it is timely to consider what training and development the committee requires in order to fulfil its role.

The remit of the committee is laid down by the Constitution and to fulfil that role committee members will need to understand a range of topics. The aim of this report is to explore with committee members what skills and knowledge they need to tackle their role with confidence. All members will have differing levels of knowledge and skill and so some training needs will be collective whilst others will be personal.

## Background

The terms of reference of the Standards Committee are laid down in the Constitution as follows:

- a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors, co-opted members, including church and parent governor representatives;
- b) assisting the Councillors, co-opted members, including church and parent governor representatives, to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;
- c) advising the Council on the adoption or revision of its Members' Code of Conduct;
- d) monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct, the Officers' Code of Conduct and the Council's Whistleblowing policy and any other appropriate codes of conduct and procedures;
- e) advising, training or arranging to train Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- f) the exercise of (a) to (e) above in relation to the Parish/Town Councils wholly or mainly in its area and the Members of those Parish/Town Councils;
- g) the presentation of an annual report by the Chairman of the Standards Committee to Council.

From those terms of reference it is clear that members of the Committee need, amongst other things, the following skills and knowledge:

- A detailed understanding of the Member code of conduct (including "the Nolan Principles" and those areas identified through the Committee's analysis of complaints such as use of social media, the application of confidentiality etc)
- Knowledge of how the processes work for dealing with complaints alleging a breach of the Member code of conduct including the role of the Independent Person and Monitoring Officer
- A knowledge of the rules of natural justice and evidenced based decision making plus how to apply them in the context of a standards panel hearing
- Knowledge of the Member Officer protocol
- Knowledge of other codes of conduct and procedures (e.g. Whistleblowing, Officer Code of Conduct)

Members of the committee may identify further skills and knowledge that they will require. Committee members are asked to consider the above list and use their experience to date to help identify a comprehensive list of matters. Members will have vary degrees of experience in the matters identified and therefore it will be necessary to agree which items should be the subject of collective training of the whole committee and which will be for individual members.

It is proposed that at future meetings of the Committee short training sessions (30 minutes) are provided prior to committee meetings. These are suitable for small topics that simply require knowledge transfer. Larger topics can be split across several sessions but some topics may need a longer training event (e.g. an evening session). Equally there is limited opportunity for skill practice in a 30 minute session and so again longer events may be required.

Simultaneously, an online training package is being developed for all borough councillors which should be available later this year. This package can also be made available to town and parish councillors.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	Revenue

### **Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

Existing resources will be used to provide training.

### **Cross-Council Implications** (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

The work of councillors impacts all parts of the Council

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

There are no direct implications from this report.

### **Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030**

No specific impacts of this report.

### **Reasons for considering the report in Part 2**

Not applicable

### **List of Background Papers**

None

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