

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Planned Training for Members of Standards Committee</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>10 June 2008</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Director, Strategy and Governance</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Brian Foley</b>	<b>Tel:</b> <b>29-3109</b>
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<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	Forward Plan No.	
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members of the Standards Committee on proposals for Member training throughout the forthcoming year.
- 1.2 The report makes proposals for training for:
  - a. all elected members and co-opted members with voting rights
  - b. members of the Standards Committee

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 The Standards Committee is asked to note the report and to accept the recommendations for the additional training initiatives over the forthcoming year.
- 2.2 It is recommended that the Standards Committee engage with the Member Development Working Group to provide seminars that all elected members and co-opted members with voting rights should attend which will focus on developing their awareness of current equalities legislation and good practice.
- 2.3 It is recommended that further training be offered to all members of Standards Committee on the process for Local Assessment of Complaints. An event will be organised along similar lines to that held in March 2008.
- 2.4 It is recommended that the officers and members who have expressed interest in training aimed at developing awareness of Mediation should attend the seminar being organised for ACSeS South East Members.

- 2.5 It is recommended that two members of the Standards Committee and the Standards and Complaints Manager attend the Seventh Annual Assembly of Standards Committees on 13 – 14<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

**3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**

- 3.1 In March 2008 the Chair of the Standards Committee wrote to all elected members and co-opted members informing them of the changes to the Code of Conduct. This reminded them that they must not act in a way which might hinder the authority's fulfilment of its positive duties under equalities laws. Failure to observe this could result in a complaint that there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct.
- 3.2 It was therefore thought appropriate to offer training in the form of development seminars to improve members' awareness of the obligations placed upon them by current equalities legislation so that members did not inadvertently breach the relevant paragraph of the Code.
- 3.3 It is recommended that the Standards Committee work with the Member Development Working Group to provide seminars that all elected members and co-opted members can attend which will focus on developing their awareness of current equalities legislation and good practice.
- 3.4 At the Standards Committee meeting on 18 March 2008 training was provided to members of the committee to familiarise them with the process of carrying out initial assessment of complaints. It was generally agreed that this session which used material provided by the Standards Board for England was of great value.
- 3.5 The membership of the Standards Committee is about to change. It is therefore recommended that the training be repeated so that all new members become familiar with the processes of assessment and members who remain on the Standards Committee have an opportunity to further develop their assessment skills. A further event will be organised along similar lines to that in March 2008.
- 3.6 When complaints about member conduct are received an option for dealing with those matters will be to use alternative dispute resolution. Mediation and Conciliation are examples of such an approach to dealing with complaints.

- 3.7 Expressions of interest have been sought from Standards Committee members and officers involved in the complaint process to develop their knowledge, understanding and awareness of Mediation.
- 3.8 It is recommended that the officers and members who have expressed interest in this training should attend the seminar being organised for ACSes South East Members.
- 3.9 Arrangements have been finalised for the forthcoming Seventh Annual Assembly of Standards Committees on 13 – 14<sup>th</sup> October. Two members of the Standards Committee and the Standards and Complaints Officer will be attending.

#### **4. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### 5.1 Financial Implications:

There will be some costs incurred in the provision of training. Equalities training carried out in conjunction with the Member Development Working Group will be funded by that group. Mediation costs will be met through a combination of staff development budgets and the Standards budget. Costs associated with Standards Conference will be met from the Standards budget. Assessment training will be carried out in-house.

##### 5.2 Legal Implications:

The code of conduct has been prepared and adopted by Brighton & Hove City Council in accordance with Section 51 of the Local Government Act 2000 and it is mandatory for members to sign a formal undertaking to observe the authority's code. Members should be fully aware of the code and potential for breaching the paragraphs of the code.

The Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 set out the framework for operating a locally based system for the assessment, referral, investigation and hearing of complaints of member misconduct. Members of the Standards Committee will be involved in those processes.

##### 5.3 Equalities Implications:

An Equalities Impact Assessment for complaints received under the new regulations is being carried out by the Standards and Complaints Manager to ensure members of the public are aware of the change in procedures and to make the service widely accessible.

##### 5.4 Sustainability Implications:

There are no Sustainability Implications for this report.

5.5 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

A risk assessment has been carried out which identified that the following items will need review:

- Training for members in operation of new assessment procedure has been carried out and has been effective.
- Ensuring members are aware of their duties under code of conduct and with particular reference to the obligations placed on the council under current equalities legislation.

5.6 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

The training recommended in this report will contribute to the quality of ethical governance and leadership within the City.

**6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

6.1 None

**7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 None

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

1. None

**Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. None

**Background Documents**

1. None