

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

24th January 2002

PRESENT:-

District Council Members

Councillor Rose (Chair) and Councillors Bale and Mrs. Mead.

Parish Members

Mrs. C. Barker and Mr. R. Buxton.

Independent Members

Mr. P. Dawn, Mr. L. Taylor and Mr. D.R. Williams (Vice-Chair).

SC/9. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th December 2001 were received.

SC/10. **TRAINING SESSION – 23RD JANUARY 2002**

Members of the Committee discussed the INLOGOV training seminar held during the previous evening at Amber Valley Borough Council. All Members of the Committee had attended this session together with Members and officers from Amber Valley Borough Council and Bolsover District Council. It was considered that the attendance of Members of other authorities had been advantageous to hear a variety of opinions and this joint approach had also reduced the cost of the seminar. Concern was expressed that the contents of the new Model Code may dissuade many prospective election candidates, particularly for parish councils. One of the parish representatives also considered that malicious complaints and grudges within parishes and villages may also deter prospective candidates.

The Legal and Members' Services Manager advised that he had obtained approval from Professor Chris Skelcher, the facilitator of the training course, for the use of the course material for training purposes. In general, Members of the Committee now felt more confident of their role on the Committee, although an Independent Member expressed some concern at the Committee becoming a dormant body, rather than adopting a proactive role. This also led to a discussion on the decisions taken so far in respect of training and planning for the adoption of the Code within South Derbyshire.

The Legal and Members' Services Manager considered that Members of the Committee may wish to become involved in training sessions with officers and it was felt that parish councils should be encouraged to nominate at least one representative to attend the training sessions.

(Councillor Mrs. Mead left the Meeting at 6.00 p.m.)

SC/11. **MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT**

(a) **Co-opted Members**

Further to the discussions at the previous Meeting on whether the Code of Conduct would apply to co-opted Members, the Legal and Members' Services

Manager advised that this was the case. A parish representative now queried whether the Code would apply to those individuals who were not parish councillors but were co-opted onto various parish committees e.g. Sand and Gravel Site Liaison Committees. This matter would also now be clarified.

(b) Scrutiny Arrangements

Further to the discussions at the last Meeting, the Committee received a letter from the Standards Board for England advising of the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct for authorities operating executive arrangements, which were designed to allow Overview and Scrutiny Committees to take advantage of expert advice in their deliberations. However, there were presently no equivalent provisions in the Model Code of Conduct for authorities not operating executive arrangements but it was the Government's intention that the provision should apply to both types of authorities. An omission in the drafting of the Model Code of Conduct had left such provisions out of Schedule II but the Government had undertaken to add such provisions if the Code was amended in the future.

Whilst it was the Standards Board's policy to encourage Councils to adopt the Model Code without local provisions at present, the Board had advised that it was important that the Overview and Scrutiny provisions also applied to those Councils operating alternative arrangements and would therefore support these changes. Accordingly, the Council had been requested to consider including these provisions in the local Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED:-

That such a provision be included in the draft code to be recommended to the Council for adoption.

SC/12. **REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

The Legal and Members' Services Manager advised that the District Council's Information Technology Division was now in a position to proceed with work on a database relating to the Register of Members' Interests. At the present time, it was unclear where the Registers for parish councils should be held and Members felt that the offices of the District Council may be appropriate in the circumstances.

SC/13. **COMMENTS ON MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Legal and Members' Services Manager advised that he had written to Clerks to Parish Councils, requesting any comments on the Model Code of Conduct by 15th February 2002 in order that they may be considered by this Committee prior to any recommendations being made.

SC/14. **REVISED WORKPLAN**

The Committee noted the revised Workplan attached to the Minutes of the last Meeting.

SC/15. **TRAINING DEVELOPMENTS**

The Legal and Members' Services Manager advised that he had arranged a forthcoming meeting with [Page 2 of 3](#) Westbury, Secretary of the Derbyshire

Association of Local Councils to discuss the best method of providing training to parish councils. He understood that Mr. Westbury was keen to extend the training sessions beyond the boundaries of South Derbyshire. The possibilities of issuing various types of training materials was discussed, including a leaflet on “frequently asked questions” or an instructional video, if available. In this regard, the Legal and Members’ Services Manager agreed to contact the Standards Board to ascertain such availability. Members considered that a preferred method for training could involve the Monitoring Officer meeting parish councils either individually or in groups, possibly on an Electoral Ward basis.

It was reported that as part of the Standards Board’s commitment to building a strong relationship with Standards Committees and Monitoring Officers, the Board was intending to organise a one-day conference, possibly during early June of this year. Details had not yet been finalised but it was intended that the location and timing of the conference would be as convenient as possible for delegates in order that the majority would not be required to stay overnight. It was not proposed to make any charge for attendance and the content of the conference was likely to include both a plenary session and smaller breakout sessions running parallel and of interest to different attendees. These may include issues relevant to Monitoring Officers, Standards Committee Chairs, Independent Members, Parish Members etc. It was suggested that appropriate attendance may be from the Monitoring Officer, the Chair and one or two further delegates, depending on the size of the Committee. It was also anticipated that invitations would be forwarded to other relevant bodies. At this stage, the Committee had been requested for a likely number of delegates together with the issue it would most like to see covered at the Conference.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That this Committee would wish to be represented at the Conference by the Monitoring Officer and at least two Members of the Committee, to be determined when further details are available.***
- (2) That the Committee would wish to see parish council issues covered at the conference.***

SC/16. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next Meeting of the Committee be held on Thursday, 21st February 2002 at 5.30 p.m.

C.H. ROSE

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 6.25 p.m.