

STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 1ST NOVEMBER 2007

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER 2007

Report of the: Monitoring Officer

Status: For consideration and decision

This report supports the Key Aim of effective management of Council resources.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Loney

Head of Service Head of Legal and Committee Services – Christine Nuttall

Recommendation: (a) That Members are requested to comment on and endorse the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report; and

(b) that the Full Council notes the Monitoring Officer's Report.

Background

- 1 This is the third Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer as attached as an appendix to this report.

Introduction

- 2 The purpose of the Monitoring Officer's Report is to provide an overview of the work of the Monitoring Officer in the past year and to provide an opportunity to review and learn from experience.

Substance of Report

- 3 The Monitoring Officer's Report sets out the Monitoring Officer's statutory responsibilities, summarises how these duties have been discharged during 2007 in accordance with the Council's Constitution, legislative requirements and draws attention to those issues that will require attention in the next calendar year.

Key Implications

Financial Implications

- 4 The Monitoring Officer's Report has not identified any financial implications for this Council over and above normal requirements.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5 The Monitoring Officer's Report has not uncovered any legal impropriety.

Equality

- 6 This report has not identified any equality issues.

Risk Assessment Statement

- 7 The Monitoring Officer's Report increases awareness of the ethical framework and sets out the good governance arrangements that have been set in place. The Monitoring Officer's Report has not identified any illegalities and has not identified any potential illegalities for the next calendar year. The risk of impropriety remains low.

Sources of Information:

Information supplied by the Standards Board for England

Information supplied by various officers and sections of the Council

Ombudsman's Report

Contact Officer(s):

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Corporate Resources Director
Dr. Pav Ramewal

**REPORT OF THE
MONITORING OFFICER
2007**

INTRODUCTION

This is the third Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer. The purpose of the report is not only to provide an overview of the work of the Monitoring Officer in the past year, but also to provide an opportunity to review and learn from experience. This Report therefore, sets out the Monitoring Officer's statutory responsibilities summarises how these duties have been discharged from the last Monitoring Officer's Report in November 2006 through to November 2007, in accordance with the Council's Constitution and legislative requirements and draws attention to those issues that will require attention in the next calendar year.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Standards Committee comments on and endorses the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report.

That the Full Council notes the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report.

2. THE ROLE OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

The role of the Monitoring Officer derives from the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Act requires local authorities to appoint a Monitoring Officer.

The Monitoring Officer has a broad role in ensuring the lawfulness and fairness of Council decision making, ensuring compliance with Codes and Protocols, promoting good governance and high ethical standards.

A Summary of the Monitoring Officer's Functions is as follows:

| <u>Description</u> | <u>Source</u> |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Report on contraventions or likely contraventions of any enactment or rule of law | Local Government and Housing Act 1989 |
| Report on any maladministration or injustice where the Ombudsman has carried out an investigation | Local Government and Housing Act 1989 |
| Appoint a Deputy | Local Government and Housing Act 1989 |
| Establish and maintain the Register of Members' interests. | Local Government Act 2000 |
| Report on sufficiency of resources. | Local Government and Housing Act 1989 |
| Maintain the Constitution | The Constitution |
| Support the Standards Committee. Promote and maintain high standards of conduct. | Local Government Act 2000 |

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| <u>Description</u> | <u>Source</u> |
|---|---|
| Receive reports from Ethical Standards Officers and case Tribunals | Local Government Act 2000 |
| Consulting with, supporting and advising the Head of Paid Service and Chief Finance Officer on issues of lawfulness and probity. | The Constitution |
| Legal Advisor to the Standards Committee when carrying out a local Determination Hearing. | Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination)(Amendment) Regulations 2003 |
| Receive referrals from Ethical Standards Officers for local Investigations. | Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination)(Amendment) Regulations 2003 |
| Advise on whether executive decisions are within the Budget & Policy Framework. | The Constitution |
| Provide advice on vires issues, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity, Budget and Policy Framework issues to all members. | The Constitution |
| Issuing Dispensations to Members regarding prejudicial interests. | The Standards Committee |
| Considering whether certain Information is exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. | Freedom of Information Act 2000 |

3. THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution sets out how the Council operates and how decisions are made. It sets out the procedures which are followed to ensure that these decisions are efficient, transparent and that those who make the decisions are accountable to local people. The Monitoring Officer is the guardian of the Council's Constitution and is responsible for ensuring that the Constitution operates efficiently, is properly maintained and is adhered to.

3.1 Constitutional Review and Revision

During 2007 the Constitution was reviewed and revised. The main objective of the review was to make the council's constitution more efficient, transparent and accountable to Members, Officers and local people.

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The review also undertook to make the Constitution more user friendly, to reduce duplication and for the document to include the Council's main Codes, Protocols, Procedure Rules and guidance documents.

3.2 Fitness for Purpose

The purpose of the Constitution is set out in Part 1 and is to:

- ensure that those responsible for decision making are clearly identifiable to local people and that they explain the reasons for decisions;
- support the active involvement of local people in local authority decision making;
- help Members represent local people more effectively;
- enable decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively; and
- hold decision makers to public account.

3.3 Managing the Constitution

The revised Constitution was formally approved by the Council on 25th September 2007. Any significant changes to the Council's decision making arrangements and Committee structure will need to be approved by full Council. The Council will monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure that the aims and principles of the Constitution are given full effect.

4. LAWFULNESS AND MALADMINISTRATION

The Monitoring Officer is the Council's lead adviser on issues of lawfulness and the Council's powers and in consultation with the Head of Paid Service and the Chief Financial Officer advises on compliance with the Budget and Policy Framework. Part of this role involves monitoring Committee reports, agendas and decisions to ensure compliance with legislation and the Constitution. The Monitoring Officer ensures that Cabinet decisions are made publicly available. This is done by Officers from Committee Services. Cabinet decisions can be viewed by members of the public through the Council's website: www.sevenoaks.gov.uk

If the Monitoring Officer considers that any proposal, decision or omission would give rise to unlawfulness or if any decision or omission has given rise to maladministration she must report to the full Council or where appropriate the Cabinet after first consulting with the Head of Paid Service and Chief Financial Officer. Any proposal or decision that is subject to such a report cannot be implemented until the report has been considered.

The sound governance arrangements operated by the Council ensure that the power to report potentially unlawful decision making is rarely used and the Monitoring Officer has not had to issue such a report throughout 2006/07.

4.1 Reports from the Local Government Ombudsman

The annual letter for 2006/07 from the Local Government Ombudsman sets out a summary of the complaints received against the Authority and dealt with by his office over the year. These were as follows:

- He received 22 complaints in 2006/07, a slight increase, compared with last year.
- The biggest category continues to be planning with 11 complaints a slight drop on last year.
- During the year he made decisions on 28 complaints. He found no maladministration in 11 complaints and he exercised discretion to close a further 5 without requiring any action by the Council. He found that 4 complaints were outside jurisdiction.
- When he completes an investigation he must issue a report. There are a significant proportion of investigations that do not reach the report stage. This is because the complaint is settled during the course of the investigation. These are called “local settlements”.
- He issued no reports against the Authority this year.
- Four complaints were settled, all of which were about planning,
- In respect of the Council’s complaints procedure and handling of complaints his office referred four “premature complaints” to our authority for consideration. At 14% of all decisions this was well below the national average.
- Two premature complaints were resubmitted to the Ombudsman during the period. No maladministration was found in either complaint.
- The Ombudsman was of the opinion that the evidence suggested that the Council handles complaints well. It was noted that planning officers are willing to negotiate with developers to try and remedy errors.
- In respect of response times to Ombudsman enquires it was noted that this was more than double the response time of last year, and was nearly 36 days compared with the target time of 28 days for councils. However, planning was the only department taking longer than 28 days and its figure was inflated by one exceptional case. The Ombudsman was notified that this year we have reviewed the Council’s complaints procedure and some improvements had already been identified and are being implemented that include:
 - a new information/guidance sheet and intranet section for staff;
 - movement of the formal complaints process to our Customer Relationship management computer system including an automated notification process to ensure deadlines are met; and
 - an updated version of our customer feedback leaflet.

The annual Ombudsman’s letter is published on their website www.lgo.org.uk.

5. GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Monitoring Officer has a pro-active role in ensuring good practice, good procedures and good governance. This involves promoting networking, collaboration and joined-up working practices and decision making as well as ensuring standing orders, codes of practice, procedures are kept under review and up to date. Collaborative working entails regular monthly liaison meetings with the three Statutory Officers, Heads of Service/Management Team as well as working in partnership with other departments to develop and disseminate policies and procedures. Work being carried out to further develop and refine the use of resources represents a good current example of collaborative working. The Council has undertaken a voluntary pilot study under the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) and as a result this year the Authority have been rated an Excellent Authority by the Audit Commission.

Good governance involves providing procedure notes, guidance, developing and implementing protocols and providing briefings and enabling effective support to Councillors in their different roles including Member training.

The tasks for the year 2008 are to:

- Increase Members understanding and knowledge of the requirements of the revised Code of Conduct.
- Implementing a local referral unit in respect of breaches of the Code of Conduct
- Promote and increase an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the statutory officers.
- Increase awareness of the ethical framework, and supporting policies and procedures and provide further training to Members and to staff.
- Promote and encourage joined up working and better governance arrangements.
- Monitor and test the operation and effectiveness of the ethical framework.
- To provide information on the ethical framework to the public, town and parish councils and members of staff.
- Review the effectiveness of governance arrangements based on the CIPFA/Solace framework.
- Work to embed a culture of risk management throughout the Authority.
- Enhance and support the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the new Performance and Governance Committee.
- Continue to promote diversity and equalities within the Authority.
- Embrace the proposals set out in the 2006 Local Government White Paper.

5.2 The Ethical Framework Manual

Last year the Monitoring Officer developed a Training Manual to strengthen and improve the ethical framework of the authority.

The purpose of the manual was to provide an authoritative source of information, on the Code of Conduct and the work of the Standards Board for England.

The Authority adopted a revised Code of Conduct on 25th September 2007 following an extensive round of consultation via the Standards Board for England on suggestions on a revised Code. The Standards Committee of this authority took an active part in the consultation process in an attempt to influence the final provisions of the revised Code.

Following the introduction of the revised Code an amended Training Manual is to be implemented to coincide with weekly training workshops for Members as well as Parish and Town Council Clerks on the requirements of the revised Code.

6. THE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK AND SUPPORT TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

As Lead Officer for the Standards Committee and the Ethical Framework the Monitoring Officer has a key role in facilitating, promoting the Council's Ethical Framework and in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct within the Authority. As well as policy development and implementation this also involves advising Members and Officers including those within the Parish/Town Councils on propriety issues, advising the Standards Committee on applications for dispensations and advising the Standards Committee when they determine an allegation of misconduct on the part of a Member including a Member from a Parish/Town Council. Investigations may also be referred to the Monitoring Officer from an Ethical Standards Officer for the Standards Board for England. The maintenance of the Registers of Interests for the District as well as the Parish/Town Councils is also the responsibility of the Monitoring Officer.

Examples of the Standards Committee's work during 2006/2007 is as follows:

- Annual Monitoring Officer's Report.
- Consulting on the Review of the Code of Conduct
- Report on the Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England.
- Report on the Fifth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees.
- Term of Reference of the Committee.
- Report on "A Question of Standards" – Prescott's Town Hall Madness and the Standards Board for England's Response.
- Disciplinary Hearings and the Press and Public.
- Looking at the Role of the Ombudsman.
- Devolution – Annual Review 2005/06 – The Standards Board for England.

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- Standards Committee Pre-hearing Briefing.
- The Case Review Number Four.
- Training and Development.
- Nick Marcar speaking about his experiences as a former Ethnical Standards Office at the Standards Board for England.
- Adoption of the New Code.
- Member's Register of Interest.
- Protocol on Gifts and Hospitality for Members.

6.1 Maintaining a Register of Member Interests

The Monitoring Officer is responsible for establishing and maintaining a Register of Member Interests for the District and Parish/Town Councils. Such registers are held within the Elections and Land Charges Section of the Council. With the introduction of the revised Code of Conduct gifts and hospitality worth £25 or over must now be included in the Register of Member Interests. This means that such gifts and hospitality is now a personal interest and must be declared at any meeting where a matter relating to that interest is discussed. Guidance on the acceptance and registration of gifts and hospitality was produced this year as a Protocol and forms an appendix to the Constitution.

An annual audit takes place to ensure that the Registers of Member Interests are being kept up to date.

6.2 Code of Conduct for Employees

The Council implemented an amended Code last year based on an original draft published by the IDeA. The Code forms part of the employers' terms and conditions of employment. The Code is well publicised on the Council's internal intranet and is introduced to employees through the induction process.

Under the new Code employees must declare to their Directors any non-financial or financial interests that they or members of their family have which they consider could conflict with the Council's interests. This should also be recorded on a Register of Interest form available on SIMON and forwarded to the Personnel Team.

Also under the new Code, employees must declare to their Director membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules or membership or conduct. So that there can be no misunderstanding or confusion, membership of Freemasonry and similar organisations should be declared.

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors should be made known to the employees Head of Service and Director and recorded on a Register of Interest form available on SIMON and forwarded to the Personnel Team.

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All hospitality received and given should be appropriate and necessary and must, wherever possible, have the prior sanction of the Head of Service or Director and must be recorded in the department's hospitality book. There is a Protocol on Corruption, Gifts and Hospitality contained within the Staff Code of Conduct.

6.3 Whistle Blowing

The whistle blowing policy of the Council is entitled "Staff Confidential Reporting Policy" and is publicised throughout the organisation on the internal intranet. Information on the Council's Whistle blowing Policy is included with the Staff Induction Packs.

As a first step, concerns should be raised with the employee's immediate manager or their superior. This depends however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For example, if it is believed that management is involved, the employee should approach:

- the Audit and Efficiency Manager
- the Head of Personnel and Development
- any Director
- a Councillor

Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated by Management, the Personnel Section, Internal Audit, or through the disciplinary process
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the external auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. Internal Audit maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcomes, (but in a form which does not endanger confidentiality). A reporting mechanism forms part of the Terms of Reference of the Performance and Governance Committee which was set up this year.

In the last calendar year there have been two matters needing to be investigated, the outcome of which proved that the allegations were groundless. These investigations were reported to the Performance and Governance Committee in the Annual Internal Audit Report in June 2007.

6.4 Human Resources Strategy and Workforce Plan

Last year a Human Resources Strategy and Workforce Plan was completed which incorporated the following:

- Recruitment
- Learning and Development

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- Employment Stability
- Corporate Equalities and Inclusion
- Dignity at work
- Capability
- Disciplinary
- Grievance Procedure
- Sickness Absence
- Violence at Work
- Domestic Violence Policy Statement
- Parental and Family Leave
- Flexible Working
- Maternity Leave
- Relocation Expenses
- Alcohol and Substance Misuse
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Child Protection

The above policies are regularly reviewed in line with legislation changes.

6.5 The Standards Board for England, Standards Board Complaints and Determinations

The Monitoring Officer is responsible for establishing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the Standards Board for England. The Monitoring Officer is also responsible for receiving reports from Ethical Standards Officers regarding investigations carried out by the Standards Board into the conduct of Members. Such reports may need to be determined by the Council's Standards Committee. The Ethical Standards Officer can now refer allegations of Member misconduct for local investigation and determination.

6.6 Cases Reported to the Standards Board November 2006/November 2007

| | |
|--|-----|
| Total allegations made: | |
| District Councillors | Nil |
| Parish/Town Councillors | 10 |
| Not referred | 4 |
| Ethical Standards Officer Investigations which found no breach | 2 |
| Current Ethical Standards Officer Investigations which may be referred for local determination | 1 |
| Referred cases which may be sent for local investigation | |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| and determination | 3 |
|-------------------|---|

6.6 Local Investigation & Determination Procedures for Complaints regarding the Conduct of Members

Last year the Standards Committee agreed new procedures for handling local investigations and a revised Local Determination Procedure. The Monitoring Officer may delegate other Council Officers to perform the function of investigation into the conduct of Councillors of the District and Parish/Town Councils. In appropriate cases, the Monitoring Officer will appoint the Deputy Monitoring Officer to undertake the investigation, but in other cases it may be appropriate to appoint an outside investigator, which could involve borrowing from another authority. The Monitoring Officer has entered into a Protocol for Mutual Assistance by the Kent Monitoring Officers.

The Monitoring Officer may require any Council Officer to provide a statement, answer questions or supply information to assist in the conduct of an investigation and require Councillors to provide such statements, answer questions or supply information.

The Investigative and Determination Process is working well. However, shortly, ethical standards will be made a truly local issue. The key provision is that local Standards Committees will be handed responsibility for receiving complaints and deciding whether they should be investigated. The Standards Board for England's new role will be that of strategic regulator with the responsibility to monitor and promote standards and to support and oversee local authorities in their application of the Code. Only cases that cannot be handled locally because of conflicts of interest or because they raise issues of particular importance will be dealt with by the Standards Board.

6.7 Reviewing the Effectiveness of the Ethical Framework

One of the key on-going areas of work is to review and assess the impact of the ethical framework on the behaviour of Members of the District, Parish/Town Councils and Council staff. Many of the tools used to assess standards of customer care within the organisation; such as interviews and customer feedback also lend themselves to the assessment of ethical health. The Monitoring Officer anticipates that in the year ahead the Standards Committee's work programme will include work in this area in order to allow it to assess the effectiveness of work to date and to plan for the future.

7. CORPORATE COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION

Legal updates including details of new legislation are circulated by the Legal Team to relevant Officers within the organisation. Those Officers then circulate legal updates including new legislation to Members when they consider this to be appropriate.

This year the Legal Department has introduced a Legal Section newsletter which contains legal updates on issues that Members and staff may find interesting, helpful and relevant. The guide supplements their usual frequent updates which are sent to specific people about their area of work. Examples of content are:

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- Planning conflict resolved – Enforcement Notices defence.
- Validation of planning applications
- Advertisements – Town and Country Planning
- Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Data Protection Act – new guidance on personal data
- Code of Conduct for Councillors – update

The Legal Section have this year implemented a Time Recording system and for some users Case Management. The Section are well on the way to achieving Lexcel accreditation.

Examples of work undertaken in the last year to update and train officers on new legislation are as follows:

- Data Protection Update
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Property: Housing Act 2004 and Private Lettings
- Property Law: Leases
- Practice Management: Managing Risk
- Local Government: Safe and Clean Communities
- Property: Common Sense?
- Local Government: Vexing Disclosure
- Property: E-Conveyancing
- Employment: Tribunals and Tribulations?

All Cabinet reports and the various committee reports have a compulsory heading in which the author has to consider Legal Implications and Human Rights issues, and if there are likely to be such implications the report is to be sent to the Legal Team for relevant advice.

8. SUPPORT TO COUNCIL, CABINET, SCRUTINY AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The distribution and publication of committee reports, agendas and decisions is central to meeting the requirements of a key deliverable. It is the Monitoring Officer's responsibility to oversee the process and ensure that these documents comply with statutory and constitutional requirements.

This includes:

- Distributing and publishing all agendas within five clear working days of the meeting taking place and ensuring that all agendas are compliant with the access to information rules and exempt information is marked up accordingly.
- Advertising public meetings five clear days before the meeting date.

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- Ensuring that papers are made reasonably available to the public.
- Drafting minutes for approval by the chair within nine working days.
- Publishing a record of all decisions including key decisions taken by Cabinet within 48 hours (2 working days) after the meeting.
- Ensuring that petitions are handled in accordance with the Council's Constitution.
- Ensuring that meetings are accessible.

8.1 Statutory Meetings Analysis

One of the explicit aims of the Local Government Act 2000 was to streamline the decision making process to allow Councils to focus on service delivery.

In 2006/07 the following were serviced:

| | |
|--|----|
| Full Council Meetings (including 1 extraordinary meeting and 1 annual meeting) | 8 |
| Cabinet | 14 |
| Overview and Scrutiny Board (obsolete May 2007) | 6 |
| Performance and Governance Committee | 3 |
| Electoral Arrangement Committee | 0 |
| Environment Select Committee | 8 |
| Services Select Committee | 6 |
| Social Affairs Select Committee | 6 |
| Modern Local Government Group | 5 |
| Development Control Committee | 16 |
| Standards Committee (including determination hearings) | 5 |
| Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board | 4 |
| Licensing Committee | 3 |

Other meetings serviced include Development Control Committee site meetings (14) and Licensing Committee hearings (9).

The volume of meetings represents a substantial commitment of both Councillors' and Officers' time and resources. It is of great importance that meetings constitute an effective use of time and resources; that they add value to corporate effectiveness and help in meeting the aims and objectives set out in Part 1 of the Constitution and the Community Plan.

8.2 The Forward Plan

The co-ordination and maintenance of the Forward Plan is central to meeting the requirements of good governance as it enhances open and transparent decision making.

In compliance with Access to Information Procedure rules and the Constitution, the Forward Plan sets out key decisions which will be taken by the Cabinet. The Forward plan sets out the date/period within which the decision will be taken. The Forward Plan is published on a monthly basis.

8.3 Call-In requests

There were no call-in requests within 2006/07.

8.4 Overview and Scrutiny

This year Members reviewed the relationship and respective workloads of the three Select Committees and the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB). The overview and scrutiny functions were transferred to the Select Committees and OSB was disbanded. In addition a Performance and Governance Committee was set up.

This overhaul was necessary to ensure the overview and scrutiny systems within the Council were working effectively. The feedback from the CPA Pilot Inspection Report in July 2006 had recognised the strength and success of the Select Committees. However, they concluded that OSB had lost its direction and required reviewing. The changes have been designed to strengthen the Council's overview and scrutiny function.

The Council has plans to further develop successful and responsive overview and scrutiny. Some of the challenges in this area are as follows:

- Further overview and scrutiny Member training.
- Engaging our community to ensure effective and responsive local government through overview and scrutiny.
- Developing closer working relationships between the Executive and Members to enhance overview and scrutiny.
- Building effective scrutiny with our partner organisations.
- Measuring the effectiveness of overview and scrutiny.

8.5 Performance and Governance Committee

This year the authority implemented the creation of a Performance and Governance Committee. This Committee was required to ensure alignment with recently received CIPFA Guidance in order to incorporate relevant aspects required to be covered by an "audit" committee. The Committee will enable the Council to meet the requirements relating to audit committees and also to ensure high level insight of the Council's procurement activities in compliance with sound Corporate governance requirements.

9. MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Monitoring Officer is responsible to the Standards Committee for the provision of training to Members within the District and the Parish/Town Councils. An extensive training development programme for Members is also organised by the Personnel Team of the Council.

The Monitoring Officer tailors training to each individual Member's needs and has produced a revised Training Manual for each Member of the District Council and for each Clerk to the Parish/Town Councils in relation to the provision of the revised Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer has set up further weekly training workshops for District Members and for Parish/Town Council Members and Parish/Town Council Clerks, following on from those that took place last year.

The training workshops will be rolled out to all 29 Parish and Town Councils and all District Councillors. The Monitoring Officer last year extended training on the Ethical Framework to Officers within the Council. The Monitoring Officer intends to do the same this year.

Earlier this year, prior to the Local Government elections, the Council hosted a Pre-Elections Candidates Day which included information on the Role and Expectations of a Councillor, the Code of Conduct, Participation in Council Business, Communication and Behaviour Expectations.

Post election training also took place as well as specialist training on the Code of Conduct both old and new. The specialist training was undertaken by a representative from a top 100 law firm and was well received and attended by District, Town and Parish Members. Such training took place in collaboration and partnership with other Kent authorities. Further training on the Code of Conduct also took place for Members of the Development Control Committee.

The approach to training has resulted in a high level of Members and Clerks being trained. The training has been well received with Members and Clerks indicating on monitoring forms that training objectives have been met.

10. CONCLUSION

The Monitoring Officer's role encompasses both proactive and reactive elements. The proactive role centres on raising standards, encouraging ethical behaviour, increasing awareness and utilisation of the elements of good governance and ensuring that robust procedures are in place.

The reactive role focuses on taking appropriate action to deal with issues and potential problems as they arise. The Monitoring Officer's effectiveness in this role is in turn dependent on effective systems and procedures being in place to identify problems and ensure that Members, Officers and public are aware of appropriate channels to raise concerns.

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The work programme for the next year aims to expand on the work carried out this year and to consolidate on and embed the systems, policies and procedures that are at present in place.

Christine Nuttall
Monitoring Officer