

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

2 FEBRUARY 2011

LOCAL ELECTIONS MAY 2011 – FORMALITIES AND MEMBER TRAINING

Report from: Deborah Upton, Monitoring Officer

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Summary

This report advises the Standards Committee of the proposed arrangements for completing various formalities and the provision of member training in the run up to and after the local elections in May 2011.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and voting co-optees serving on Council Committees. The Committee has power to advise, train or arrange training for Councillors and co-optees on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.

2. Background

2.1 Elections to the Council and Parish Councils in Medway will take place on Thursday 5 May 2011. It is possible that a UK Referendum on changing the voting system will also be held on that date. There are a range of legal and constitutional requirements relating to Council activity and work with Members in the run up to, and immediately after the local elections for which planning is underway.

2.2 Some of these requirements and arrangements will be of particular interest to this Committee.

3. Report

3.1 **Purdah** – the elections period (known as purdah) runs from the date of publication of the Notice of Election on Monday 25 March 2011 through to and including Thursday 5 May. During this period it is important serving Councillors and Council Officers are fully aware of the statutory requirements relating to publicity which take on a particular significance at this time. As usual, advice has been issued by the Head of Member's Services and Elections to all serving Medway Councillors and Council Managers on the

rules relating to local authority publicity and the practical application of those rules during purdah.

- 3.2 **Declaration of Acceptance of Office** – after the local elections Councillors are required to sign a declaration of acceptance of office in which they undertake to observe the Members' Code of Conduct. The declaration must be made within two months of election. In line with the wishes of this Committee any person standing for election will receive information about this requirement and a copy of the Code in the information pack for candidates issued by the Head of Members Services and Elections.
- 3.3 **Registration of Interests** – within 28 days of election Councillors are required to register financial and other personal interests prescribed in the Code. The register of interests for Councillors elected to serve on Medway Council is held by the Monitoring Officer and has to be open to public inspection at all reasonable hours. All Councillors elected to serve on Medway Council will each receive a form for registration of their interests in the pack of documentation supplied to them immediately after the election. During their term of office each Councillor is required to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of becoming aware of any new personal interest or a change to any previously registered interest. The Committee has previously recommended that the Register of Interests be published on the Council's website and further work on this will commence after the elections. In the meantime the new web pages for Democracy and Governance include a facility to see at glance the record of declarations of interest made by every Member of the Council at each meeting they attend.
- 3.4 **Member Training** – The proposed induction programme for new Councillors is attached at Appendix A. This has yet to be discussed by Medway Council's Member Development Advisory Group and may be changed to reflect the comments and suggestions of that group. In addition to the programme for Medway Council Councillors the Monitoring Officer will also offer a briefing for Parish Councils on the Code of Conduct and related responsibilities and obligations.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community.
- 4.2 Planning ahead for the period immediately before and after the local elections in 2011 will minimise the risk of any statutory provisions or formalities being overlooked.

5. Financial and legal implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 The proposed information packs and member induction programme incorporate briefings for Councillors in relation to member conduct.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 The Standards Committee is asked to note and comment on the arrangements for member training and compliance with the various statutory formalities for the period before and after the local elections in May 2011.

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Background papers

Members' Code of Conduct

DRAFT INDUCTION PROGRAMME FOR COUNCILLORS

MAY/JUNE 2011

PROPOSED DATE(S)	ACTIVITY
28 March - 4 April	Candidates advised of induction dates & programme
5 May	Letter from Chief Executive to elected Councillors enclosing induction booking form, and other information
6-8 May	Party Group meetings
10 May	Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer available to accept declaration of acceptance of office and advise on registration of interests.
10 May	Welcome session and exhibition
Throughout May	Suggested seminars/sessions
	Strategic Overview [at Welcome Session]
	Local Government finance and financial management responsibilities
	Coach tour of Medway
	Code of Conduct, representation on outside bodies etc
	Democracy & Governance – how the Council works (decision-making)
	Partnership Working
	Community engagement
	Casework management/surgeries
	Overview & Scrutiny
	Development Control
	Licensing
	Diversity & Equality
	Directorate specific briefings
	Risk Management
	Health & Safety responsibilities
8 June	South East Employers Induction Seminar for newly elected Councillors, Maidstone