

CODE OF CONDUCT 2007

Personal interests

8.—(1) You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where either—

(a) it relates to or is likely to affect—

(i) any body of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by your authority;

(ii) any body—

(aa) exercising functions of a public nature;

(bb) directed to charitable purposes; or

(cc) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union),

of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management;

(iii) any employment or business carried on by you;

(iv) any person or body who employs or has appointed you;

(v) any person or body, other than a relevant authority, who has made a payment to you in respect of your election or any expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties;

(vi) any person or body who has a place of business or land in your authority's area, and in whom you have a beneficial interest in a class of securities of that person or body that exceeds the nominal value of £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital (whichever is the lower);

(vii) any contract for goods, services or works made between your authority and you or a firm in which you are a partner, a company of which you are a remunerated director, or a person or body of the description specified in paragraph (vi);

(viii) the interests of any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25;

(ix) any land in your authority's area in which you have a beneficial interest;

(x) any land where the landlord is your authority and you are, or a firm in which you are a partner, a company of which you are a remunerated director, or a person or body of the description specified in paragraph (vi) is, the tenant;

(xi) any land in the authority's area for which you have a licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy for 28 days or longer; or

(b) a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting your well-being or financial position or the well-being or financial position of a relevant person to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward, as the case may be, affected by the decision;

(2) In sub-paragraph (1)(b), a relevant person is—

(a) a member of your family or any person with whom you have a close association; or

(b) any person or body who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors;

(c) any person or body in whom such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000; or

(d) any body of a type described in sub-paragraph (1)(a)(i) or (ii).

Disclosure of personal interests

9.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) to (7), where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you attend a meeting of your authority at which the business is considered, you must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.

(2) Where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority which relates to or is likely to affect a person described in paragraph 8(1)(a)(i) or 8(1)(a)(ii)(aa), you need only disclose to the meeting the existence and nature of that interest when you address the meeting on that business.

(3) Where you have a personal interest in any business of the authority of the type mentioned in paragraph 8(1)(a)(viii), you need not disclose the nature or existence of that interest to the meeting if the interest was registered more than three years before the date of the meeting.

(4) Sub-paragraph (1) only applies where you are aware or ought reasonably to be aware of the existence of the personal interest.

(5) Where you have a personal interest but, by virtue of paragraph 14, sensitive information relating to it is not registered in your authority's register of members' interests, you must indicate to the meeting that you have a personal interest, but need not disclose the sensitive information to the meeting.

- (6) Subject to paragraph 12(1)(b), where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you have made an executive decision in relation to that business, you must ensure that any written statement of that decision records the existence and nature of that interest.
- (7) In this paragraph, “executive decision” is to be construed in accordance with any regulations made by the Secretary of State under section 22 of the Local Government Act 2000(d).

Prejudicial interest generally

- 10.—**(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority you also have a prejudicial interest in that business where the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.
- (2) You do not have a prejudicial interest in any business of the authority where that business—
- (a) does not affect your financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in paragraph 8;
 - (b) does not relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or any person or body described in paragraph 8; or
 - (c) relates to the functions of your authority in respect of—
 - (i) housing, where you are a tenant of your authority provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease;
 - (ii) school meals or school transport and travelling expenses, where you are a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, or are a parent governor of a school, unless it relates particularly to the school which the child attends;
 - (iii) statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, where you are in receipt of, or are entitled to the receipt of, such pay;
 - (iv) an allowance, payment or indemnity given to members;
 - (v) any ceremonial honour given to members; and
 - (vi) setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Prejudicial interests arising in relation to overview and scrutiny committees

- 11.—** You also have a prejudicial interest in any business before an overview and scrutiny committee of your authority (or of a sub-committee of such a committee) where—
- (a) that business relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not) or action taken by your authority’s executive or another of your authority’s committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees; and
 - (b) at the time the decision was made or action was taken, you were a member of the executive, committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee mentioned in paragraph (a) and you were present when that decision was made or action was taken.

Effect of prejudicial interests on participation

- 12.—**(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority—
- (a) you must withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting considering the business is being held—
 - (i) in a case where sub-paragraph (2) applies, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence;
 - (ii) in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at that meeting;unless you have obtained a dispensation from your authority’s standards committee;
 - (b) you must not exercise executive functions in relation to that business; and
 - (c) you must not seek improperly to influence a decision about that business.
- (2) Where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority, you may attend a meeting (including a meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee of your authority or of a sub-committee of such a committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise.

AGENDA ITEM: 4

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

HELD:

2 OCTOBER 2007

Start:

6.30pm

Finish:

7.56pm

Councillors: O'Toole (Chairman)
Dereli

Officers: Human Resources Manager
ICT and e-Government Manager
Human Resources and Development Officer
Senior Member Services Officer (CAJ)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Collinson and D. Duffy.

2. SUBSTITUTIONS (IF ANY)

There were no substitutions.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

Members considered the notes of the Member Development Commission held on 4 April 2007.

In considering the notes comments/observations noted in discussion included reference to:

- Member attendance at organised training sessions.
- The forthcoming Code of Conduct Training.
- Update on the internal training session on the basic working of Local Government Finance.

The Chairman indicated that he would write to Members to encourage them to attend the Code of Conduct training scheduled to take place on 29 November 2007 at Edge Hill University.

AGREED: _____ That the notes of the meeting held on 4 April 2007 be agreed.

(Note The Chairman varied the order of business so that agenda item 7, ICT Training for Members, was considered next. The note order remained unaffected).

5. PROJECT PLAN

Members considered the revised Project Plan as circulated and contained on pages 7 to 10 of the Book of Reports and noted the changes to the membership of the Commission for 2007/08.

AGREED: _____ That the revised Project Plan be confirmed.

6. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT - FEEDBACK FROM THE GROUPS

The Member Development Representatives provided an update on behalf of their Groups.

Comments/observations noted in discussion included reference to:

- The ITN exercise.
- Accessing training.
- Members recognising the importance of participation in training events.

AGREED: That the update be noted.

7. ICT TRAINING FOR MEMBERS

The ICT and e-Government Manager updated the Commission on ICT Training for Members of the Council and explained the purpose of the voice recognition software.

Comments/observations noted in discussion included reference to:

- Use of laptops.
- Web-site developments.
- The limitations of the voice recognition system.

It was felt that the voice recognition facility could be of benefit to some IT users, and that Members should be contacted to ascertain their interest in using the tool.

Thanks was extended to the ICT and e-Government Manager for the update and to his team for the continuing quality of IT support provided to Members.

AGREED: That Members be contacted to ascertain the interest in using the Voice Recognition facility.

ACTION: *ICT and e-Government Manager*

8. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT NETWORK MEETING

The Human Resources and Development Officer updated the Commission in respect of the meeting of the Network Group held on 17 July 2007.

Comments/observations noted in discussion included reference to:

- Members' Charter developments.
- Member Development Gateway.
- The Learning Pool.

It was stated that access to the Learning Pool (the public sector's learning exchange) via the Member Development Gateway would be made available to Members shortly and that a demonstration was to be arranged. It was suggested that the demonstration and issue of the passwords for this should be undertaken prior to the December meeting of Council.

AGREED: That Officers explore the possibility of a demonstration and the issue of passwords for the Learning Pool facility to be undertaken prior to the meeting of Council on 12 December 2007.

ACTION: *Human Resource and Development Officer/Senior Member Services Officer*

9. ITN EXERCISE

The Human Resource and Development Officer updated Members on the progress in respect of the Identification of Training Needs (ITN) exercise. She reported on the evaluation of training needs tool being used to assist in the assessment process and the positive feedback from Members who had already participated in that process.

Comments/observations noted in discussion including reference to:

- The benefits of participation in the ITN exercise.
- Allocation of time to undergo the ITN exercise.

It was felt that Members should be reminded of the opportunity and benefits of participating in the ITN process.

AGREED: That Members be reminded of the opportunity to complete the ITN exercise.

ACTION: *Member Development Group Representatives/Human Resource and Development Officer*

10. MEMBER INDUCTION

Consideration was given to the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor as contained on pages 11 to 13 of the Book of Reports which provided feedback on the induction process offered to Members who were new to the Council in May 2007.

In considering the report comments/observations noted in discussion included reference to:

- The Induction process.
- Methods of evaluation of the process.
- Contents of the Induction CD.

The Human Resources and Development Officer informed Members that a new Evaluation Form was currently being developed and it was suggested that this be piloted by those Members who were new to the Council in May 2007.

- ACTION:
- (A) That the Evaluation Form be piloted as indicated and the results be reported to a future meeting of the Member Development Commission.
 - (B) That the Induction CD be issued to the Member Development Representatives for comment.

AGREED: *Human Resources and Development Officer*

11. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT - PROGRESS REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor and Human Resources Manager as contained on pages 15 to 17 of the Book of Reports which advised on the progress made in member development during the previous twelve months.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be arranged in consultation with the Chairman.



MEMBER DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION PROJECT PLAN

MEMBERSHIP:

Chairman: Councillor O'Toole Vice-Chairman: Councillor Bailey

Councillors: Collinson, Dereli, D Duffy and Swiffen

Additional Member:

(Councillor to be appointed by the Commission/Committee, if required)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

(Clear, unambiguous and workable)

1. To update the training and development policy for Elected Members.
2. To continue to develop and renew processes to identify and resource a member training needs analysis including a exploration of a competency model.
3. To ensure that all Members are given equal opportunities to attend Training courses/seminars in line with their responsibility as Councillor.
4. To monitor the expenditure of the Elected Members Training and Development budget.
5. To update and monitor the induction process, review and revise procedures as necessary.
6. To evaluate Elected Member training and development undertaken.
7. To ensure that all Members are given equal opportunities to attend Training courses/seminars in line with their responsibility as Councillor.
8. To monitor the expenditure of the Elected Members Training and Development budget.
9. To ensure that the Council takes ownership of its training and development and it appears as a regular item at Group meetings.
10. To monitor training through feedback from the Commission's Group representatives and Officer reports.
11. To update and monitor the induction process, review and revise procedures as necessary.
12. To evaluate Elected Member training and development undertaken.

13. To support the role of Elected Members as it applies to the Local Government Act 2000 and other appropriate legislation.

14. To consider future developments of the Members Development website.

OBJECTIVES

(The present, the future, comparison, resources)

The present –

- Efficient and knowledgeable Members and able to contribute to the working of the Council
- To obtain a clear understanding of what is needed to obtain Charter status.
- To establish West Lancashire's current position in reaching Charter status and regularly report on the progress.
- To receive regular feedback from the Groups' on the "way forward" for Member Development in the Council

The future –

- A provisional date for assessment.
- To put in place measures for achieving and maintaining Charter Status.
- To put in place measures to evaluate Elected Members training and development undertaken.
- To ensure that all Councillors who are supplied with lap-tops, receive adequate training and evaluation in order to use their laptops effectively.
- To ensure Councillors have a knowledge and understanding of service delivery within the Council.

Comparison –

NWEAO Charter Standards
Bench Marking with neighbouring Authorities

Resources -

Members of the Commission will act as 'Champions' in Member Development.
Officers of the Council will support the process as required.

INFORMATION

Documents (*What background papers are required to help members start their task. Do not swamp members with reams of paper*)

- Member Development Web Site includes induction, policy etc.
- Members Identification of Training Needs (ITN) exercise.

Who?	Why?	How?
North West Employers Employers Organisation (National)	To obtain an understanding of what is needed to obtain Charter Status.	A presentation at the meeting.
Neighbouring Authorities	To learn from other neighbouring Councils on Member Development	Presentation by Hynburn Borough Council. Officers networking locally.

Site Visits (Are site visits necessary – what benefits?)

Where?	Why?
Attendance at N.W. Charter Annual Celebration Event.	To network and learn from N.W. Councils' experience of Member Development.
Visits to and by neighbouring Authorities	To share good practice/experiences

ESTABLISH WAYS OF WORKING

Officer Support

Lead Officer Support – Clive Walsh, Human Resources Manager
Scrutiny Support Officer – Cathryn Jackson, Senior Member Services Officer
Human Resources & Development Officer – Christine Jones

Officers reporting as and when required –

ICT and e-Government Manager – Chris Isherwood
Health and Safety Manager (Web development) – Paul Adamson

Additional support

Use of service areas in training, as deemed appropriate.

Reporting Arrangements

- Notes of the Commission to be submitted to Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- Feedback to Members of the Commission following site visits by those attending such visits

TIME SCALES

- On-going

INFORMATION GATHERED

- Benchmarks – South Ribble etc.
- Develop Member website – whole range of information
- Action Plan to achieve Charter status.

CONCLUSION

It is imperative Members own their personal development and ensure the process agreed runs effectively. Without this, the Charter cannot be achieved.

Officers will support Members in these process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Action Plan in place to achieve Charter – All Members to be aware and own this.
2. Charter is an on-going commitment and must be maintained and a re-assessment undertaken.

REVIEW DATE –

(Usually 6 months after the final recommendations have been approved.)



AGENDA ITEM: 9

**MEMBER DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

19 FEBRUARY 2008

Report of: Assistant Chief Executive

Contact for further information: Chris Isherwood (Extn 5083)

SUBJECT: VOICE RECOGNITION SOFTWARE

District wide interest

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide feedback on the interest by Members in the use of computer based voice recognition software.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the contents of the report be noted.

2.2 That the commission agree to recommend to Cabinet that the Council adopt a policy of only offering voice recognition software to users with a disability or medical condition and that the protocol on the use of ICT by Members be updated accordingly.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 At the Member Development Commission meeting on 2nd October 2007 the ICT and e-Government Manager explained the purpose and use of computer-based voice recognition software.

3.2 It was agreed that the ICT and e-Government Manager would contact Members to ascertain interest in using voice recognition software.

4.0 ISSUES

- 4.1 Members were contacted to assess interest in the use of voice recognition software. To date we have had interest from 3 Members.
- 4.2 Voice recognition software is not meant as a replacement for keyboard use and its most common application is to aid computer users who have disability or medical issues. In order for the software to be used it needs to recognise speech patterns from the user. This is done by the user reading several passages of text to 'train' the software. The software must be trained and used in a quiet environment with no background noise. Keyboard skills are still required to open and close applications and navigate around software such as the Internet, Intranet and Microsoft Outlook.
- 4.3 Our standard build for the Councillor laptops currently uses Microsoft Office 2000 (which does not include voice recognition software). To use the voice recognition software we need to upgrade Microsoft Office to XP (this will be happening on a rolling basis as we renew laptops). There are no costs associated with this upgrade. However, this does involve staff time and if significant number of Members wanted to take up this option, current work programme priorities would be affected.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Voice recognition software is a facility that could be used to aid computer users who have either disability or medical issues, but is not designed as replacement for keyboard use or improving keyboard skills.
- 5.2 It would not be possible to offer voice recognition software to all Members without affecting current priorities and therefore the Council introduce a policy to offer voice recognition software only for computer users with a disability or medical issues.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 6.1 There are no significant sustainability or community strategy implications arising from this report

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 If voice recognition software were to be used a microphone would need to be purchased at a cost of £12.45. There would be resource implications for ICT Services in upgrading the Councillors laptops to Microsoft Office XP and in training Councillors to use the software. There are no associated software costs.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 There are no significant risks arising from this report if the proposed policy is adopted.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is no evidence from an initial assessment of an adverse impact on equality in relation to the equality target groups

Appendices

None.