

The New Role of the Monitoring Officer

The Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACSeS) has produced a paper highlighting the new role of the Monitoring Officer as a result of the Local Government Act 2000.

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The key points are:-

- The Monitoring Officer should be suitably qualified, experienced and appropriately located within the organisation.
- The Monitoring Officer should be of Chief Officer status with access to the authority's management team and involved in decision making and formulation at the highest level.
- The need for close working relationships between the 3 statutory officers – Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer.
- The need for the Monitoring Officer to be properly resourced.
- The need for protocols to help the Monitoring Officer discharge the role in a positive and constructive manner.
- The need to assist members with advice on the Code of Conduct.
- The need to advise members on the registration of interests.
- The need for the Monitoring Officer to help resolve conduct issues informally before a complaint is made to the Standards Board.
- The role of the Monitoring Officer in promoting high standards of conduct in particular through work with the Standards Committee.
- The need for liaison with the Standards Board.
- The need for Monitoring Officers to share issues and advice.
- Advice on vires issues, key decisions and whether or not they are a departure from the policy framework.

In summary the role of Monitoring Officers has substantially increased not only as a result of their key role in the ethical framework but also because they will be the focal point of advice for compliance with complex procedure rules under new constitutions.

Local authorities will need to recognise that new role and its contribution to successful implementation of the modernising agenda.