

REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

GENERAL REPORT

1. There has been considerable activity recently in relation to Standards issues and this report summarises some of the key issues, which have been considered.

LOCAL FILTERING OF COMPLAINTS

2. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 introduced provisions, which allow for complaints that Members have breached the Code of Conduct to be made directly to the local Standards Committee rather than the Standards Board nationally. These new arrangements require Regulations to be issued by Government before they come into force. At our meeting in March the Monitoring Officer advised that the Regulations had not yet been issued. However, there are strong indications that that the new arrangements will come into force on the 1st of May 2008.
3. When the new arrangements are implemented there will be a need to establish Sub Committees to determine whether a complaint should be investigated (the so called "local filter"), to review local filter decisions and to hear any cases following an investigation. Each of these Sub Committees will require Independent Members and, when dealing with Parish matters, a Parish Councillor. The Committee therefore wishes to highlight the need to increase the size of the present Committee.
4. There may be opportunities to consider some joint working in respect of some aspects of the new arrangements and, when Regulations are issued, the Committee will give further consideration to this matter with a view to making recommendations to Council.

GUIDANCE ON CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

5. We have considered a fact sheet published by the Standards Board for England which is available on their website. This provides a relatively straightforward guide to this aspect of the Code and its existence is drawn to the attention of Members.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEWLY ELECTED BOROUGH AND PARISH COUNCILLORS

6. We discussed the arrangements for the newly elected Councillors. A section within the Induction Day for Borough Councillors will include an introduction to the Code of Conduct, and in addition a training session is to be held in the Summer specifically on standards issues. The training in the Summer will be open to all Borough and Parish Councillors but will be particularly useful for new Members, any Members who have not received training before or those who are in need of a basic refresher.

Recommendation

7. The Council is recommended to note the report.

MR RA ELLWOOD
CHAIR OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

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There are no background papers to this report.