



**AGENDA ITEM: 8**

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
20 December 2005**

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**Report of : Council Secretary and Solicitor**

**Contact for further information : Mr T P Broderick (Extn. 5001)**

**SUBJECT : FEEDBACK FROM FOURTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS  
COMMITTEES**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To provide a summary of the above-noted event.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That the contents of the report be noted.

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**3.0 BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Legal Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer) attended the Fourth Annual Assembly of the Standards Committees on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> September 2005 in Birmingham.

3.2 At the event, keynote speeches were given by Sir Anthony Holland - Chair, the Standards Board for England; Phil Woolas MP - Minister for Local Government; David Prince - Chief Executive, the Standards Board for England and Sir Alistair Graham - Chair, Committee of Standards in Public Life.

3.3 A note of the speech given by the Chief Executive for the Standards Board for England is attached to this report at Appendix 1. This confirmed that at that time, 34% of cases had been referred by the Standards Board for local investigation, with another 9% of cases being referred to Local Standards Committees for local determination. He predicted that half of all cases would be investigated or determined locally by 2007. He also highlighted statistics which moves the

Standards Board forward on its target of meeting 90% of cases cleared within a six-month time span.

3.3 The Minister set out his aspiration that the local role was not just one of policing but to try and engender a culture of good conduct, with enforcement being the exception. He also referred to the review of the code and said that following the conference Government would be looking at the matter further considering the following key themes:

- i. A consistently high level of conduct.
- ii. Allegations to be dealt with quickly and fairly.
- iii. Where misconduct is proved it is dealt with forcefully and speedily.
- iv. Where vexatious or political and there is no real concern over individual conduct, these must be weeded out. He also wished to avoid any trial by media and to this end emphasised the need for the speed and expertise of the Monitoring Officer and the Standards Committee locally.
- v. Advocacy for local causes and conflicts of interest were a concern and the review of the code would be looking at this to ensure that where Members are not allowed to take part because of their interests some avenue for local representation must be maintained.

3.4 Sir Alistair Graham, Chair of the Committee of Standards in Public Life sought a national strategic role for the Standards Board for England with local application of the framework put in place nationally.

3.5 In addition to the keynote speeches several plenary sessions were held on investigations, hearings and "public confidence in your hands", which dealt with how Authorities can build the public's confidence and trust in both themselves and local democracy.

#### **4.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

4.1 These matters relate to the promotion of high ethical standards at a local level.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are significant resource implications arising from this report.

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### **Background Documents**

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

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1. Notes of speech by David Prince, Chief Executive, Standards Board for England