

Title of Report : FIFTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES

Report of : Head of Legal and Democratic Services

To : Standards Committee

Date : 1st December 2006

Item No

Purpose of report : To advise the Committee on key issues emerging from the Fifth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees held last month in Birmingham

Recommendation(s) : That the report be noted

Key decision : No

Portfolio Holder : N/A

Scrutiny Responsibility : N/A

Ward(s) affected : All

Report Approved by : Legal (Jeremy Thomas)

Policy Framework : N/A

1. The Chairman and I attended the Fifth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees which was held in Birmingham on 16 – 17th October 2006. I append issues 1-3 of "The Connection" which was a daily 'newspaper' issued during the Conference and which may be interesting reading for the Committee.
2. The whole theme and content of the Conference related to the (then) forthcoming White Paper on local government. The White Paper was published on 26th October 2006 and the relevant extracts for this Committee appear elsewhere on the agenda.
3. There are two significant changes on the horizon. The first is a revised Code of Conduct. The Local Government Minister announced his intention, at the Conference, that this should be in place for Councils' May 2007 Annual Meetings. At the time of writing this report the draft statutory instrument has yet to be published. If it is published by 1st December 2006 then I will report on that orally to the Committee.

4. The second significant change is the move to a locally determined enforcement regime and the 're-positioning' of the Standards Board to a 'strategic regulator'. This change is dealt with in the White Paper and will require primary legislation. The Standards Board will endeavour to ensure that this happens in 2008.
5. Of particular concern, to my mind, is the introduction of the so called 'local filter'. At present, all allegations/complaints of breaches of the Code of Conduct must be made, in the first instance, to the Standards Board. In 2005/06, for example, of the 3806 complaints received by the Board, 22% (687) were referred for investigation (either by the Ethical Standards Officer or by the Monitoring Officer for the Council concerned). That 'central filter' in my view, works well. It is free from local political influence and because these were a relatively small number of Standards Board employees handling all allegations it has the two merits of consistency and efficiency.
6. The proposed legislative change will mean that all local allegations will be made to myself in the first instance and it will be for this Committee to determine whether an investigation should be carried out. Whilst I have no doubt that the Committee is up to the task, it will inevitably increase significantly the burden upon myself and my colleagues.

Name and contact details of author:-

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Background papers - none

The connection

Monday 16 October 2006 Issue 1 www.annualassembly.co.uk

National snapshot of standards committees revealed

The findings of the first ever national study of standards committees and their work are to be revealed today in *Standards committees: a national snapshot* taking place at 2.15pm in Hall 1.

This thought-provoking research was commissioned by the Standards Board for England in partnership with ACSes (Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors) in response to the shift towards local ownership of the ethical agenda. This shift will focus greater attention on the role of standards committees and monitoring officers, making this research both important and timely.



Dawn Hands, Research Director at BMG Research, will be presenting the study's findings at 2.15pm today.

The study was carried out by BMG Research, whose research director Dawn Hands will be discussing the results later today and

answering any questions.

The aims of the research were to discover views, experiences and activities; to both gather information on current practices and inform future direction. All standards committees and monitoring officers in England were invited to take part through a postal survey, and just over 3,000 questionnaires were mailed out. The overall response rate was excellent with over 60% of individual authorities responding.

The findings to be presented this afternoon will include information about: the number of local investigations undertaken; perceptions of workloads;

the extent to which members feel supported and valued; the impact of local investigations; and a profile of standards committee members.

The Standards Board believes that this work provides invaluable information with which to move forward towards the new ethical framework, adding greatly to the existing body of knowledge, and helping to inform debate and target future support. The Standards Board is currently considering the full implications of the findings — in the meantime a full report will be available from www.standardsboard.co.uk by the end of November.

Key areas targeted by the research:

- a national profile of standards committees
- recruitment of independent members
- training, activities and experience of standards committee members
- the impact of hearings, both positive and negative
- role, profile and qualifications of monitoring officers
- support needs of standards committee members

Welcome to Bridging the Gap

We are delighted to welcome you to the Fifth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees, one of the most important events of the year for all those who work with the Code of Conduct.

The focus of this year's conference is on the challenge for local government to become the champion of high standards across public life, standards that the public rightly expects.

Leaders, elected mayors

and chief executives will need to be leading this challenge, actively supporting standards committees, their independent chairs and members.

Monitoring officers will need the resources and capacity to give consistent and robust advice, and to handle cases locally.

The prize, and the test, is a system that has bridged the gap — one that is both locally owned and driven, and that commands public confidence.

I hope that our speakers, sessions and your own contributions at this year's conference will help everyone move forward towards this goal. I hope too that you have an enjoyable couple of days here in Birmingham and benefit from the networking that this event provides.

Sir Anthony Holland, Chair, The Standards Board for England

Meet your fellow delegates

This year's conference presents more networking opportunities than ever before. In particular, the facilitated exchange sessions, in which the discussion is largely delegate-led, give you the opportunity to meet your fellow delegates and share views and experiences. These are marked as sessions 1 and 2 on the agenda (right).

Outside of the sessions, you can use the designated networking area, open from 1pm today. Keep in touch via the message board and meeting point, and ask Standards Board staff any questions you may have at the special information desk.

Get to know other delegates over sit down lunches, and of course at tonight's dinner,

which will provide a relaxed networking opportunity. The evening begins with a drinks reception at 7.30pm, followed by a four-course dinner with wine and coffee at 8.00pm. There will be a cash bar available and the evening will be accompanied by live jazz music from the Al Gurr Quartet, featuring Sarah Coleman on vocals.

Agenda

08.30 – 10.15	Registration
09.15 – 10.00	Getting up to speed
10.15 – 10.25	Welcome
10.25 – 10.40	Setting the standard
10.40 – 10.55	Bridging the gap: towards strategic regulation
10.55 – 11.25	What will an effective ethical environment look like?
11.25 – 11.45	Question time
11.45 – 12.00	Comfort break
12.00 – 13.00	SESSION 1 Implications of the revised Code and the future ethical environment
13.00 – 14.15	Lunch
14.15 – 15.15	Standards committees: a national snapshot
15.15 – 15.45	Comfort break
15.45 – 16.45	SESSION 2 How do you measure up?
16.45 – 17.00	Comfort break
17.00 – 18.15	SESSION 3 Bridging the gap: knowledge, techniques and skills
18.15	Close of day one
18.30 – 19.30	Fringe events (see <i>The Fringe</i> overleaf)
19.30 – 20.00	Drinks reception
20.00 – 23.00	Conference dinner



THE BIG DEBATE

WHEN POLITICS BECOMES PERSONAL: IS LOCAL LEVEL GOVERNANCE THE PANACEA?
17 OCTOBER 2006, 10.45, HALL 1

CPD accreditation for solicitors and barristers

Last year's conference was the first at which solicitors could earn credits towards the Law Society's continuing professional development (CPD) scheme.

The Standards Board for England applied for accreditation to improve the learning opportunities at the conference for law professionals, and in response to feedback from previous delegates.

Now, at this year's assembly, barristers can also claim accreditation towards the General Council of the Bar's CPD scheme. This year the amount of credit available at the conference totals 11 hours.

To claim credits, delegates who are barristers need to register their attendance at the enquiries desk. We would also remind all delegates who are solicitors or barristers to update their personal training records.

Any questions?

If so, please drop by the Standards Board for England information desk in the registration area. Here, members of staff will be ready to answer any questions you may have about the Code of Conduct or the work of the Standards Board, and to respond to any of your feedback.

You will also find a question sheet in your conference delegate pack that you received this morning at registration.

Drop your completed question sheet into one of the many question postboxes situated around the conference centre, at any time during the next two days. Your questions will be responded to after the conference.

THE FRINGE

Don't miss this year's extended programme of fringe events, taking place today at 6.30pm, following the close of the main conference sessions and before the evening drinks reception begins. Covering a range of topics of key interest to delegates, these optional sessions are organised and run independently of the main conference programme by a range of bodies from the local government family. This year's sessions are as follows:

- *Achieving excellence in local filtering: monitoring officers' perspectives* is an interactive session hosted by the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACS&S).
- *Independent members gaining a voice* is the inaugural meeting of the Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England (AIMSce).
- *The ethical governance toolkit — how does your authority measure up?* Hosted by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), this session discusses issues such as how the toolkit works and future developments.
- *The future of local community governance and standards*, hosted by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), will be a discussion around the ethical framework of different models of community governance.
- *Leadership and governance and the Lyons Inquiry proposals* A discussion forum based on the key role for effective leadership and governance at all levels, especially at local level, as proposed by the Lyons Inquiry. Hosted by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE).

the Case Review

In your delegate bags you'll find a free, newly-published copy of the most recent *Case Review*. It focuses on the way that local issues have been dealt with at the local level and the Standards Board's role in supporting and regulating the overall framework, and includes

many more examples of local cases than in previous volumes. If you'd like to receive a regular in-depth analysis of significant cases by email, sign up to the *Case Alert* by visiting the Standards Board's website www.standardsboard.co.uk

STEERING COMMITTEE 2006

Thank you to all members of the 2006 Annual Assembly's steering committee for the commitment they have given to making this event a success. The committee plays an invaluable role in developing the format and content of the conference you are attending today.

If you would like to volunteer to be one of our committee members for the Sixth Annual Assembly in 2007, please complete the application form enclosed in your delegate pack and submit it at the conference enquiries desk.

Dennis Ball
Independent Member,
Standards Committee,
Blackpool Borough Council

Lal Banerjee
Chair, Standards Committee,
Royal Borough of Kingston
upon Thames

Christopher Borland
Independent Chair,
Standards Committee,
South Somerset District Council

Councillor Geraldine Carter
Calderdale Metropolitan
Borough Council

Councillor Ian Evans
Vice Chair,
Standards Committee,
Broadland District Council

Melanie Gibbs
Independent Member,
Standards Committee,
Gloucestershire County
Council, and
Independent Member,
Standards Committee,
Gloucestershire Police Authority

Sara Goodwin
Former Monitoring Officer,
Bassetlaw District Council

Councillor Mandy Griffiths
Vale Royal Borough Council

Michelle Grove
Monitoring Officer,
Peterborough City Council

Mark Heath
Monitoring Officer,
Southampton City Council

Eddy Marchant
Independent Chair,
Standards Committee,
Durham County Council

Patrick O'Connor
Independent Chair,
Standards Committee,
London Borough of Tower
Hamlets

Jonathan Reed
Monitoring Officer, Mid Suffolk
District Council

Caroline Roberts
Independent Chair, Standards
Committee, Leicester City
Council and Leicestershire
Police Authority, and
Independent Member,
Standards Committee,
Leicestershire and Rutland
Combined Fire Authority

Peter Taverner
Vice Chair and Independent
Member, Standards Committee,
Teignbridge District Council

KEY TO LANYARD COLOURS

The colour of delegates' lanyards (neck cords) can be used to identify their position or profession. Please wear your badge at all times.

WHITE

Monitoring officers

DARK GREEN

Standards committee members

YELLOW

Independent members

ORANGE

Chief executives

BLACK

Council leaders

RED

Speakers

PURPLE

Conference steering committee members

JADE GREEN

The Standards Board for England members

BLUE

Others (delegates who don't fit in to any of the categories above)

Recycle recycle recycle!

Recycling bins are situated around the conference centre for any of your unwanted papers, and you can hand back unwanted delegate bags to any member of conference staff in the registration area.

Contacts



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Website:
www.standardsboard.co.uk



CONFERENCE DINNER

TONIGHT IN HALL 3

DRINKS RECEPTION 19.30 / DINNER COMMENCES 20.00

White paper weeks away says Woolas

The Local Government White Paper is now a matter of weeks away, according to local government minister Phil Woolas MP in his plenary session yesterday. He says the paper will be devolutionary and look to empower local government, councillors and local people — and that the standards regime must follow.

The Code of Conduct is a vital element of the more locally-based framework, and the minister says that the consultation on a revised draft Code will be issued very shortly. The new Code, which resulted from a review by the Standards Board, will be in place for the local elections on 3 May 2007.

For the new system to work effectively, the capacity and capability of monitoring officers and standards committees to carry out their new roles must develop.

"The [new] Code will be user-friendly, fair and proportionate — in fact, a reflection of the conduct regime itself as it should be."

This means having the right training, development and guidance in place for both officers and members, and this important role will continue to be delivered by the Standards Board.

To help retain public confidence, the minister says standards committees

should have an independent chair, but should not be required to have a majority of independent members. Maintaining a balance of members, including those with a representative role, helps to ensure local democratic ownership.

The minister recognises concerns about resource implications of the new regime and the need for monitoring officers to be robust and consistent, resisting political pressure. He added that he wants to see authorities cooperate and work together. His speech ended by asking delegates to step up and meet the challenges facing them in the months ahead.



Phil Woolas MP (top) and Patricia Hughes, Deputy Chair of the Standards Board for England, during their plenary sessions yesterday.

The new strategic outlook

Patricia Hughes, the deputy chair of the Standards Board for England, yesterday gave an overview of the future of the Board and the revised Code of Conduct.

Patricia pointed out the consistency of the volume of complaints and the high threshold for referring cases. Experience of locally handled cases so far showed smooth handling of the majority of cases, though there were a few teething problems to watch out for. The focus of the Standards Board is already adjusting in anticipation of the new framework: away from the volume of cases investigated and towards the provision of a stronger framework of support and guidance.

"The proposed changes are far-reaching, they are radical; they give us an opportunity to get the Code we want and to get it right," Patricia Hughes

The Standards Board is working closely with the Department for Communities and Local Government to make sure the new system is designed to be as effective and flexible as possible. This raises a number of issues, for example ensuring equal treatment of members from one authority to another, and resource implications for some district councils.

Patricia urged delegates carefully to consider the proposed revisions to the Code of Conduct, and stressed the need for authorities to adopt the revised Code as early as possible. She finished by summarising how the Standards Board sees its future role — increasingly strategic in outlook, making sure the system is running well, issuing formal and informal guidance, and giving individual advice and support.

Up to speed

Yesterday's *Getting up to speed* session provided an introductory welcome for delegates new to the Code of Conduct or conference from David Prince, the chief executive of the Standards Board for England.

David helped delegates understand more about the intentions behind the Code, and get to grips with some of the jargon and common misunderstandings associated with the ethical framework. He then looked at the future of the Code and at topics that would be covered in the rest of the conference.

There was a high turnout for this optional event, which included the opportunity to meet Standards Board representatives and other delegates in a similar position. If you would like to find out more about the work of the Standards Board, come to our information desk in the registration area today.

Help us to recycle

Please hand back your badge and lanyard for recycling when you leave the conference today and place any unwanted papers in the recycling bins. If you no longer require your delegate bag, please hand it in at the registration area. Thank you.

Agenda

08.00 – 09.00	Refreshments
09.00 – 10.15	SESSION 4 Bridging the gap: knowledge, techniques and skills
10.15 – 10.45	Comfort break
10.45 – 11.45	When politics becomes personal: is local level governance the panacea?
11.45 – 12.00	Comfort break
12.00 – 13.15	SESSION 5 Bridging the gap: awareness, development, wider debate
13.15 – 14.30	Lunch
14.30 – 15.45	SESSION 6 Bridging the gap: awareness, development, wider debate
15.45 – 16.00	Comfort break
16.00 – 16.20	Time to reflect
16.20 – 16.30	Moving forward
16.30	Close



the Case Review *number four*

OUT NOW

For additional copies, priced at £15 each, call 0845 078 8181 or email publications@standardsboard.co.uk

Win a £20 book token

Fill in and return your delegate feedback form before you leave the venue this afternoon and you could be the lucky winner of a £20 book token. Five delegates will be picked at random to receive the tokens and notified in the next few weeks.

Your feedback on the conference is vital to ensure that future events continue to improve and meet your requirements, and the Standards Board encourages all delegates to share their thoughts and ideas. This year we would particularly like to hear your views about our dedicated conference website.

You will find a feedback form in your delegate pack. Please complete it and hand it in to a representative of the Standards Board as you leave the conference today

A new home for the Standards Board

The Standards Board for England is moving to Manchester. From next April, the organisation will be based in its new headquarters in Lever Street, Manchester.

The move is in response to the government's desire to relocate both civil servants and agencies outside of London. As well as having financial benefits, it is believed that moving organisations such as ours out of London will have a real benefit in terms of regeneration and development of the regions. We have always been committed to getting out and about to be close to local authorities we work with and this commitment will remain the same. Our regular roadshows will continue to feature destinations across the country.

Moving cities

The Standards Board has chosen Manchester as our new home for a number of reasons. As well as being a city with a proud history of robust local government, it has excellent transport links and a good labour market from which we have already been able to recruit new colleagues with valuable local government experience.

We will publicise our new contact details towards the beginning of next year. The Standards Board is looking forward to the move as one more change on our way to becoming a strategic regulator with a focus on guidance, support and an overview of an effective locally based system.

Keep in touch

Please register your email address at the enquiries desk to receive an electronic copy of the third conference newsletter later this month. It will provide an overview of the conference's main themes and of the key concerns put forward by delegates during the sessions, as well as articles and further photos of delegates and speakers.

To remind yourself of the detail of this year's sessions, visit www.annualassembly.co.uk where all of the session handouts and many

other items of conference literature will be available to download in the next few days.

Already looking forward to next year?

All of the delegates attending this year's conference will automatically receive booking information for next year's conference as soon as it becomes available. The Sixth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees will be back at the ICC in Birmingham from 15-16 October 2007. We look forward to seeing you again.

KEY TO LANYARD COLOURS

The colour of delegates' lanyards (neck cords) can be used to identify their position or profession. Please wear your badge at all times.

WHITE	Monitoring officers
DARK GREEN	Standards committee members
YELLOW	Independent members
ORANGE	Chief executives
BLACK	Council leaders
RED	Speakers
PURPLE	Conference steering committee members
JADE GREEN	The Standards Board for England members
BLUE	Others (delegates who don't fit in to any of the categories above)

Any questions?

Please come along to the Standards Board information desk to pose any questions you may have. Alternatively, use the question sheet in your conference delegate pack and drop it into one of the many question postboxes situated around the conference centre.

Contacts



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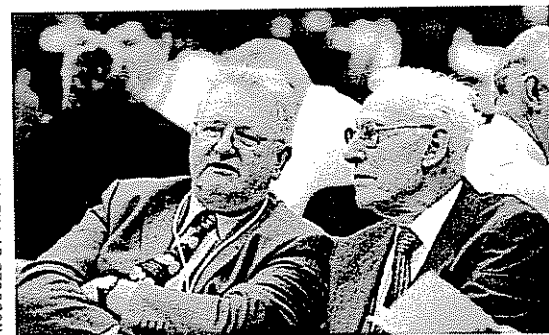
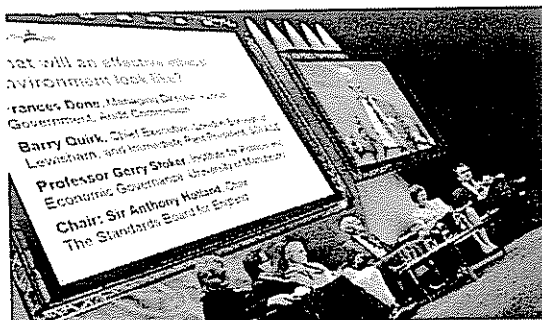
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Website:
www.standardsboard.co.uk

CONFERENCE PICTURES

Bridging the gap: these pictures capture some moments from the first day of the conference. There will be plenty more shots of both speakers and delegates in the third issue — see *Keep in Touch* above for more details.



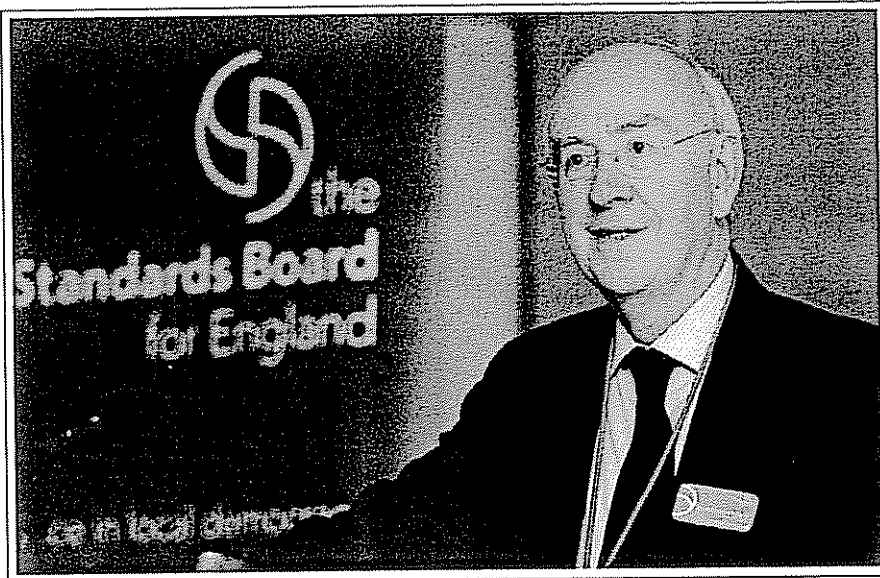
PRODUCED BY THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND AND PRINTED BY ALPHAGRAPHICS



ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 2007

15-16 OCTOBER 2007
ICC, BIRMINGHAM

Towards effective local regulation



Many delegates I spoke to at this year's Annual Assembly of Standards Committees commented on how far and how fast the standards agenda has moved over the last year. Half of all standards committees have now handled a local case, and there are increasingly proactive approaches to championing and upholding high standards locally.

Most importantly, awareness of the Code of Conduct is increasing and there is evidence of improved standards of behaviour. I would like to congratulate all of you for what you have achieved so far.

Much is now in place to support the increasingly locally owned and driven standards framework outlined by Phil Woolas MP in his document *Standards of Conduct in English Local Government: the Future*,

and reinforced in his keynote speech that opened our Fifth Annual Assembly.

Of course there is still much to do. Above all we need to work together to embed the revised Code of Conduct, which the Minister promised would soon be published for consultation. The Standards Board for England will produce guidance and training materials, and we urge monitoring officers and standards committees to ensure that councils adopt the revised Code quickly.

This means ensuring that training is put in place ready for the elections in May 2007. We will work with you on pilots to make local filtering a success in 2008.

A major theme of the Assembly was the importance of high standards of conduct and

behaviour in underpinning good governance, especially for leaders and chief executives living out and exemplifying the values of good governance. That includes ensuring that standards committees have the necessary capacity and support, and that monitoring officers are equipped to give clear and robust advice, recognising members' legitimate community advocacy roles.

I hope you enjoy this final newsletter which includes a look at some of the discussion that went on amongst delegates at this year's sessions, news from the Standards Board for England, a summary of plans for the revised Code of Conduct, and further pictures from this year's event.

Initial feedback on the Assembly has been very positive. Soon we shall be planning next year's event, and we are delighted by the large number of new volunteers wanting to join the 2007 steering committee. This group will be considering what went well at this year's event and what could be improved, and will help make next year's event just as useful and successful.

I look forward to seeing you there.

Sir Anthony Holland
Chair, the Standards Board for England

CONFERENCE ROUND-UP

This year's Annual Assembly featured a range of sessions, from facilitated exchange sessions to workshops and debates. These summaries give you a flavour of some of the delegate discussions that took place.

Implications of the revised Code and the future ethical environment

In these sessions, delegates discussed and debated the implications of the revised Code of Conduct, the local filter for complaints and the future ethical environment.

One theme that came up in the sessions was the need for members, both prospective and returning, to understand the Code of Conduct before taking office, with many delegates also stressing the need for guidance on the revised Code as soon as possible.

Monitoring officers were concerned about whether they would have the resources to help authorities handle changes, and the need for powers other than investigation – such as mediation – to resolve issues.

The need for guidance and resources to assist with the local filter was also emphasised.

Other issues raised were: recruiting enough independent members; collaboration between councils in regards to training; placing time limits on investigations so that delays do not occur; and the need for standards committees to lead on training and ethical standards, not just on dealing with breaches of the Code.

The Standards Board for England will be producing guidance and training materials on the revised Code when it comes into force, including a new DVD, and on other areas such as the local filter. We have called on the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to look into the resources issue and will continue to lobby on this, and encourage authorities to do the same.

How do you measure up?

Delegates looked at their authorities in the context of the BMG research during these sessions.

Issues that arose included the need for a proactive standards committee chair. The lack of independent member candidates, and the lack of diversity of independents was discussed, demonstrating the need for proactive recruitment. The need for public awareness of standards committees, and the role of the chair in raising this profile, was highlighted.

The issue of training was key, with delegates emphasising the need for training to be ongoing, suggesting that experienced members mentor new members. Collaboration on training between neighbouring authorities was also recommended. Opinion was divided in one session over whether monitoring officers should be legally trained. Some delegates called for training for members to be mandatory.

Tensions between independent and elected members were discussed. A formal support network for monitoring officers was suggested for sharing best ideas and practice.

Bridging the gap: knowledge, techniques and skills

Sessions on a variety of topics addressed the challenges of a revised Code and more locally focused system. Below is a snapshot of some delegates' discussions.

In the session *Investigations – in-house or out-house?* topics discussed included the need to consider carefully the reasons why an investigation should be outsourced. If it is outsourced, key points were to be prepared, choose your investigator with care, and make sure that the monitoring officer, or

someone appropriate, sees a draft report. There was discussion around the pros and cons of joint-working more generally, and the level of involvement of the standards committee chair in investigations.

Holding an effective hearing emphasised that preparation is key, and that the composition of standards committees is important. Delegates raised worries about time resources, the number of panel members, and the fact that members could be susceptible to persuasion.

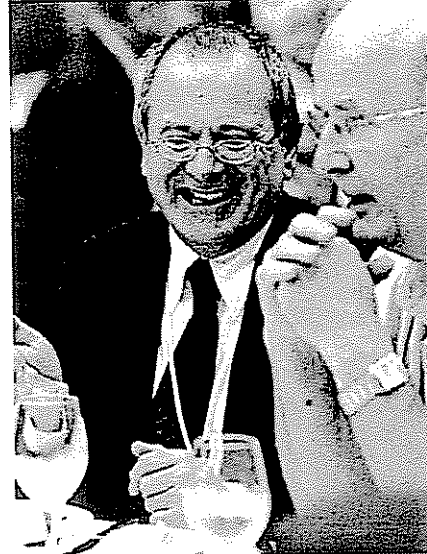
Bridging the gap: awareness, development, wider debate

These sessions focused on bridging the gap between simply fulfilling statutory obligations and integrating ethical standards into the corporate governance framework. Below is a snapshot of a couple of these sessions.

In *An inclusive approach to towns and parishes*, discussion covered the need for members, particularly clerks, to be properly trained. Whether principal authority members should be able to help parish members was debated. The *Town and Parish Standard* newsletter was mentioned as a useful information tool.

Working proactively – the role of standards committees covered the need for standards committees to have terms of reference beyond their statutory obligations, the fact that the capability of standards committees varies widely, and how standards committees can measure the ethical temperature in their authority. Also discussed was raising the profile of standards committees within their council, visiting and monitoring parish and town councils, and the need for work programmes and for the regular updating of protocols and registers.

CONFERENCE PICTURES



Conference materials online now

Presentations, handouts and speeches from the conference are available now from our dedicated Annual Assembly website. They are all under 'Session materials' in the Programme section of www.annualassembly.co.uk

What you thought

Thank you for all of your comments and feedback about this year's conference. Here's a selection of what you had to say about the Fifth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees:

- “ Overall a useful and positive contribution to the future of local government. ”
- “ Good conference as usual. Thank you. ”
- “ Very nicely paced and timetabled with stimulating mix of plenary/workshop/breaks etc. ”
- “ Slick, professional and generally very thought provoking. ”
- “ The particular strength of the Assembly is arranging a programme which can appeal to and benefit the wide spectrum of people involved in the standards process and enable them to meet each other and discuss matters of mutual interest. ”
- “ The conference is a 'master class' in organisation! The venue is ideal, staff and officers excellent. A very worthwhile event. ”
- “ Thank you! It was my first Assembly and it has been very informative, interesting and insightful. ”
- “ An excellent conference, a very diverse choice of topics. This will help me in my role as monitoring officer and my standards committee. ”
- “ The present conference is still a very good training experience, even for delegates that have been before. ”

New appointments to the Standards Board for England

Four new Board members have been appointed to the Standards Board by the Minister for Local Government, Phil Woolas. These new appointments will help to maintain the balanced proportionate representation of interests and experience central to the work of the Standards Board.

They include the first appointment of a politically independent, elected member, Councillor Shirley Flint. The other new members are Councillor Beatrice Fraenkel (Liberal Democrat), Councillor Mehboob Khan (Labour) and Councillor Sir Ron Watson CBE (Conservative).

Phil Woolas said: "I am very pleased that Shirley Flint, Beatrice Fraenkel, Mehboob Khan, and Sir Ron Watson are joining the Standards Board to represent local government interests. They will bring valuable experience and expertise to help the Board

develop a more locally-based conduct regime and to maintain high standards of conduct in local government."

The terms of the new Board members began on 23 October 2006 and will run for three years. Their biographies will be published shortly on the Standards Board's website, www.standardsboard.co.uk

There are seven other Standards Board members, including the chair, Sir Anthony Holland.

The Minister announced at this year's Annual Assembly that Sir Anthony had agreed to continue as chair of the Board until June 2008, saying that his knowledge and experience would be vital in guiding the Standards Board for England through both its relocation and the introduction of a new standards regime.

The Board consists of eleven members:

- Sir Anthony Holland (Chair)
- Patricia Hughes (Deputy chair)
- Cllr Shirley Flint
- Cllr Beatrice Fraenkel
- Paul Gott
- Elizabeth Hall
- Cllr Mehboob Khan
- Paul Sabapathy
- Prof Judy Simons
- Roger Taylor
- Cllr Sir Ron Watson

And the winner is...

Congratulations to the winners of our feedback prize draw, picked at random, who each receive a £20 book token. Thanks to all who completed their forms – your feedback is vital in planning future events.

Anne Dickens, Independent Member of Standards Committee, London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority

John Tradewell, Council Solicitor, Halton Borough Council

Dave Crowe, Independent Chair of Standards Committee, Dartford Borough Council

Councillor Ian Sams, Surrey Heath Borough Council

Doreen Porter, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Worcester City Council

At the Fringe

This year's optional fringe events were run by a range of bodies from the local government family, covering topics of key interest to delegates.

Several delegates said that they had found the event by SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) on *Leadership and governance and the Lyons Inquiry proposals* a really useful and interesting session. Discussion focused on a number of different areas, but was based around the key role of effective leadership and governance at all levels, particularly at local level as proposed by the Lyons Inquiry.

Issues highlighted at the event included the need for standards committees to provide local context and an understanding of the real issues in its particular area. Also discussed was the importance of participation – in particular the danger of stopping people with knowledge and understanding of the issues under debate from participating.

Many delegates who attended *Independent members gaining a voice*, the inaugural meeting of the Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees (AIMSce), said they saw it as an excellent way forward for the future.

THE SIXTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES

15–16 OCTOBER 2007, ICC, BIRMINGHAM

The revised Code: in summary

We thought it would be helpful to summarise the key points raised during the conference regarding the revised Code of Conduct.

The timescale for the introduction of the revised Code is decided upon by DCLG, however our best understanding of timings is:

1. **Next few weeks:** the Standards Board anticipates that the Code will be issued for consultation by the Department for Communities and Local Government in the next few weeks.
2. **End of December:** consultation should end.
3. **Late January/early February:** parliamentary approval is expected.
4. **May 2007:** revised Code of Conduct should come into effect. The intention is to allow for training to take place before this time, and the Standards Board is encouraging authorities to adopt the revised Code as soon as is practical, preferably at their annual meetings in May 2007.

Whilst the final content of the revised Code is the remit of DCLG, we anticipate that the main areas of change will be:

- a) the definition of personal interest
- b) the creation of a new category of interest called public service interest
- c) disclosure of confidential information in the public interest
- d) disrepute
- e) bullying
- f) abolition of the duty to report breaches of the Code by other members

The Standards Board will be providing guidance and training materials to help you navigate the revised Code when it comes into force.

In the meantime, please call the Standards Board enquiries line on 0845 078 8181 with any general queries about the Code of Conduct.

Roadshow events

The Standards Board is already preparing for our next events following the close of this year's Annual Assembly. We are planning to host a series of roadshows across the country in June 2007 to coincide with the proposed launch of the revised Code of Conduct and local elections results. The current proposals are to visit 12 cities across the country.

The focus of the roadshows will be on the revised Code as well as preparations for the proposed introduction of the local filter system for complaints in 2008. As in previous years the sessions will take the format of presentations and discussions, and delegates will be encouraged to contribute. Board members and the chief executive will also be on hand to answer any questions.

These roadshows will be aimed at members from local standards committees and monitoring officers. Details will be sent out nearer the time.

Previous roadshows have offered an excellent opportunity to engage with delegates, answer queries and offer guidance and support. They also offer delegates the chance to informally network with fellow members from the local area.

the Case Review number four

An analysis of local investigations and local decision appeals are just two of the topics explored in the fourth *Case Review*, a copy of which you will have received in your delegate bags at the Annual Assembly. Other topics include bullying, ethical standards officers' directions and some significant cases involving council leaders.

The publication provides a round-up of some of the most significant cases and decisions, emerging national trends and important lessons learnt so far.

If you would like an additional copy of

the *Case Review*, it is available for purchase at a cost of £15 per copy.

We also have a limited number of copies of the second and third *Case Reviews*, which examine: the role of members' private lives and disrepute; prejudicial interests and democracy; and confidentiality and the public interest. These publications, which are normally priced at £15 each, can be purchased together for £20.

To place an order call 0845 078 8181 or email publications@standardsboard.co.uk

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