

Day 1 Monday 18 October 2010

08.30-10.30 **Registration and breakfast.**

09.30-10.15 **1-2-1 Drop-in sessions**

An opportunity to talk to a Standards for England team member about a specific Code or local standards framework query. Session slots can be booked in advance via our website from April 2010. Any slots which are not booked in advance will be available to book on the day at the Delegate Information Desk.

09.30-10.15 **Getting up to speed**

Theatre-style

Aimed at: Ideal for anyone who is new to the Code or the Annual Assembly

An introductory session designed to bring you up to speed with the role and responsibilities of Standards for England and other organisations in the standards community. The session will also provide a quick overview of latest developments to the Code of Conduct and the local standards framework, and give delegates a chance to meet over coffee.

10.30-11.15 Opening address: **A place for standards**

Hall 1 plenary

Aimed at: All delegates

A briefing on the national picture, providing the latest statistics and trends from quarterly monitoring and annual returns, plus a review of the challenges and priorities for the year ahead

11.15-11.30 **Move to next session**

11.30-12.45 **Local standards, local decisions, local differences**

Theatre style

Aimed at: All delegates

This session looks at the challenges of managing and making decisions during local assessment, investigations and hearings. It's your chance to talk in-depth about consistency, clarity and cost effectiveness. These are just some of the questions we hope the session will open up for debate:

- How do you sort out what's significant from a wealth of information, and how do you know you have got the right information in the first place?
- What makes a proportionate and cost-effective investigation?
- How can we reflect local circumstances while having regard to national precedents? Do local differences really have an impact on the standards committee's decisions and is this something we should be concerned about?
- What do we need to take into account to help us to make the 'right' decision?

12.45-13.00 **Move to lunch**

13.00-14.00 **Lunch**

13.00-14.00 1-2-1 **Drop-in sessions**

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14.00-14.15 **Move to next session**

14.15-15.30 **Breakout sessions**

Please choose one of the following sessions. All sessions last for 1 hour 15 minutes

Principles of public life and the Code of Conduct

Theatre style

Aimed at: A discussion aimed at all delegates.

Selflessness...Integrity...Objectivity...Accountability...Openness...Honesty...Leadership

Do you think the Code of Conduct captures the spirit of the seven general principles of public life?

This session explores the link between the principles and the local standards framework. It gives you the chance to debate whether the principles are right for today – are they a powerful tool that can help us to increase public trust in local government – or are they just words? How can we use the principles to help uphold and promote high standards amongst elected members? Do you think

there is a good fit between the principles and the Code of Conduct? Do standards committees really reflect the principles in their management of the framework and in their responses to complaints about member behaviour?

Working with town and parish councils

Workshop

Aimed at: Suitable for town and parish council representatives and anyone who works with town and parish councils

An opportunity to discuss some of the specific standards challenges town and parish councils can face, such as breakdown in relations between different groups, poor understanding of procedures, major disputes over local 'hot topics' and registering and declaring interests. The session will look at how standards committees, town and parish representatives and monitoring officers can work with town and parish councils to help resolve these challenges.

Getting to grips with predetermination and bias

Workshop

Aimed at: A 'technical' workshop suitable for officers, but may also be useful for standards committee members.

This workshop will provide practical advice on how to understand, manage and advise on the complex issues of bias and predetermination.

Independent chairs: Skills, knowledge and development

Workshop

Aimed at: For new or aspiring independent chairs of standards committees or those involved in the development and training of independent chairs.

This session gets to grips with the role of the independent chair – explaining the responsibilities and the challenges of the job and providing practical guidance on the key skills and experience you need in order to do it well.

First steps for standards committees: Building the right foundations

Workshop

Aimed at: Mainly suitable for standards committee members, but would also be useful for officers who want to improve their authority's understanding of the Code and the local standards framework

This session starts with a look at the foundations for effective management of the local standards committee. It explains what you need to do to ensure your committee complies with requirements such as being properly constituted and making decisions within appropriate timeframes. Once these foundations are in place, standards committees can help to help ensure that councillors and the wider authority are aware of the practical implications of the local standards framework and the Code of Conduct. The session looks at some of the ways standards committees can raise awareness and ensure councillors have the right training and guidance on the Code and the framework.

Local standards live

Workshop

Aimed at: All delegates

96% of delegates who attended this session in 2009 thought it was excellent – so here it is again, with a brand new range of Code scenarios.

Watch a series of performances and spot the potential Code breaches. You'll get to question and advise the actors, drawing on your own experiences to challenge situations and raise issues. You'll pick up tips from colleagues on different ways of dealing with the scenario, and discuss good practice ideas and the pros and cons of your preferred approach.

Local assessment: Building confidence

Workshop

Aimed at: Less experienced officers and/or new standards committee members

A practical guide to managing proportionate, transparent and cost effective local assessment of complaints, designed to help you to build your confidence and knowledge. Scenarios and case examples are used to explain the process, including filtering complaints, convening sub-assessment committees, and how and when to make assessment decisions public.

Managing challenging behaviour

Workshop

Aimed at: All delegates

We are often asked for advice on how to deal with 'difficult' members, such as those who won't take on board the monitoring officer's advice, engage with the

standards committee or pay heed to the Code of Conduct. The session looks at how this kind of behaviour can impact on the standards committee, officers and on the reputation of the authority, and provides advice on the skills and techniques you can use to cope with it and make positive changes.

Discussion forum: Officers

Theatre style

Aimed at: Officers

An opportunity to share experiences, challenges and solutions with colleagues, and to ask Standards for England your questions on the framework and the Code

15.30-16.00 Refreshments and move to next session

16.00-17.15 Breakout sessions

Please choose 1 of the following sessions. All sessions last for 1 hour 15 minutes

Appeal decisions: Discussion with the First Tier Tribunal

Theatre style

Aimed at: All delegates

Get an update on tribunal processes, followed by an opportunity to discuss the lessons learnt from the past 12 months of hearings and appeals. What issues and challenges frequently come up? Where and why do interpretations between local standards committees and the Tribunal differ?

Prevention better than cure?

Workshop

Aimed at: Officers

Is it a good idea to informally 'intervene' to resolve potential Code breaches, before the more costly formal elements of the framework are initiated? This session hears examples of how liaising informally with political group leaders and providing advice to individual members can work in practice, and considers key questions such as when is informal intervention appropriate, what are the benefits and are there any dangers to look out for?

Successful investigations

Workshop

Aimed at: New or less experienced officers or those who want to improve their management of investigations

A practical session working through each stage of a local investigation process to build your knowledge of the process and improve your investigations management. The session will also provide advice on how to successfully manage tricky issues such historical complaints, those involving longstanding political disputes, bullying and how and when to link police or audit investigations to Code investigations.

Next steps for standards committees: Building a wider work programme

Workshop

Aimed at: Standards committee members

Many standards committees are ready for the next step on from simply fulfilling their statutory obligations. They are looking for ways to proactively promote ethical standards and integrate them across the culture and governance of their authority. Against this backdrop, this session gives you the opportunity to share ideas about how you can use your expertise and influence more widely and build a wider programme of work for your standards committee. The session will also consider the implications of doing this, such as how to balance this wider way of working with maintaining independence, and how to evaluate the impact of your work – how will you know when you've made a difference?

Local determinations: Building confidence

Workshop

Aimed at: new or less experienced delegates

A practical guide to managing local determinations. This session is designed to help you to build your confidence and knowledge of the local determinations process. Scenarios and practical examples are used to explain key stages of the process, including consideration meetings, hearings, sanctions, and how and when to make the findings public.

Social networking, the internet and the Code: Advising councillors

Workshop

Aimed at: Suitable for all delegates, with particular interest for officers who may need to advise members on this issue.

Do you know your 'Tweety Hall' from your 'Tweetminster'? Have you dipped your toe into the 'blogosphere'? Many councillors already understand that when it comes to reaching the electorate quickly and cheaply, online methods are hard to beat. But it can be a tricky area. This workshop provides advice on how to guide councillors through getting the most out of social media - without falling foul of the Code. You can also take the opportunity to ask speakers how you can use social media to communicate the work of your standards committee.

Code refresher

Workshop

Aimed at: New or less experienced delegates or just those who would benefit from a refresher

A chance for delegates to get guidance and answers to their frequently asked questions on the most frequent Code breaches. The session will focus on working through practical examples. Visit the Standards Forum at www.standardsforengland.gov.uk to vote for the areas of the Code you think this session should cover.

Recruiting independent standards committee members

Workshop

Aimed at: All delegates

This workshop will give practical advice on how to successfully recruit and retain independent members for the standards committee. The workshop will also look at how to develop 'job descriptions' for independent members, how to promote opportunities to join the committee (for example through effective advertising, web content and recruitment packs), and the best ways to support and train your new members.

Discussion forum: Standards committees

Theatre style

Aimed at: Standards committee members

An opportunity to share experiences, challenges and solutions with colleagues, and to ask Standards for England your questions on the framework and the Code.

17.30 18.30 **Fringe events**

Provided by a range of local government organisations. For further information, please visit www.standardsforengland.gov.uk

19.45 – **Late Drinks reception and conference dinner**

Dress code: Smart casual

Day 2 Tuesday 19 October 2010

09.00-10.00 **Registration for 1 day delegates**

Light refreshments available

09.00-10.00 **1-2-1 Drop-in sessions**

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10.00-11.15 **Breakout sessions**

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uphold and promote high standards amongst elected members? Do you think there is a good fit between the principles and the Code of Conduct? Do standards committees really reflect the principles in their management of the framework and in their responses to complaints about member behaviour?

Developing your role: Fire, police, integrated transport and park authorities

Workshop

Aimed at: Standards committee members and officers working with fire, police, integrated transport and park authorities

This session looks at examples of how these authorities can expand their terms of reference and build their work programme. Delegates can get practical advice on working with the leadership of your authority on issues including member development, remuneration and performance.

Getting to grips with predetermination and bias

Workshop

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Discussion forum officers

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11.15-11.45 Refreshments and move to Hall 1 for next session

11.45-12.45 Plenary

Hall 1 plenary

Aimed at: All delegates

Expert speakers on a topical issue to be confirmed.

12.45-13.00 Move to lunch

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15.30-16.00 **Refreshments**

16.00 **Close of conference**