

CURRENT ISSUES
(Report by the Democratic Services Manager)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is –

- ◆ to advise Members of the progress of the Select Committee Enquiry on “The Role and Effectiveness of the Standards Board for England”; and
- ◆ to invite the Committee to nominate representatives to attend the Fourth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees.

2. THE ROLE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND

2.1 Last September, the Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) resolved to undertake an enquiry into “The Role and Effectiveness of the Standards Board for England” with particular reference to

- ◆ the effectiveness of the Board in promoting and overseeing the Code of Conduct;
- ◆ the role of the Board in ensuring local authorities adhere to a Code of Conduct and its ability to assess allegations of misconduct in a timely and fair way;
- ◆ an examination of the Boards’ relationship with
 - (i) other regulatory organisations that support the ethical framework;
 - (ii) central government;
 - (iii) local government stakeholders; and
- ◆ the role of the Board in supporting the establishment and operation of Standards Committees at local level.

2.2 The Standards Board for England gave evidence to the Committee on 17th January 2005. The Minister for Local and Regional Government also appeared. Other written submissions to complement the Committee hearing have been invited. Copies of the evidence including the Standards Board submission is available on the Parliament website at –

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/200304/cmselect/cmodpm/1118/1118we01.htm

3. 4TH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES

3.1 The Fourth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees Conference is to take place at the International Conference Centre (ICC) Birmingham on 5th and 6th September 2005. The Conference provides an opportunity for Monitoring Officers, Members of Standards Committees and other local government professionals to discuss key issues and on this occasion the conference, to be entitled 'In your hands' will focus on the work of Standards Committees within local government and use the opportunity to

- ◆ examine both good and bad practice
- ◆ identify areas for improvement within their authorities
- ◆ look beyond the scope of the Standards Committee's statutory remit
- ◆ focus on the relationship between Members and their communities; and
- ◆ consider what further support and guidance is needed.

3.2 A comprehensive programme of presentations, plenary discussions and workshops will cover these topics. Keynote speakers will include the Local Government Minister, the Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP and Sir Alistair Graham who will report on the Committee on Standards in Public Life's Tenth Enquiry. This year's main debate will feature opinion influencers including Tim Minogue, editor of Privates Eye's, Rotton Borough's column.

3.3 Given the possibility that the composition of the Committee may vary after the Annual Council Meeting in May, it is suggested that places initially be reserved for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, a representative of the opposition group on the Committee, an independent Member and a Town and Parish Council representative. The Monitoring Officer will be able to confirm attendance at the conference following the meeting of the Committee on 7th July 2005.

4. CONCLUSION

The Committee is requested to –

- ◆ note the commencement of the Select Committee Enquiry on the "Role and Effectiveness of the Standards Board for England"; and
- ◆ approve the attendance of Members of the Committee at the Fourth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees Conference.

Backgrounds Papers

Leaflet detailing the content of the Fourth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees Conference.

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