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## Standards Committee

Report of the meeting held on 10th March 2005

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### Matters for Information

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#### **14. A CODE FOR THE FUTURE – CONSULTATION PAPER ON THE REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS**

The Standards Board for England has commenced a consultation process to review the Members' Code of Conduct which originally came into force for all authorities in May 2002. The Board has identified the following key areas for review and formulated 29 questions as the basis for consultation with Councillors, interested groups and representative organisations -

- ◆ public interest defence in relation to disclosure of confidential information;
- ◆ the duty for Members to report misconduct by colleagues;
- ◆ the line between public and private conduct;
- ◆ personal and prejudicial interests; and
- ◆ registering interests.

Before formulating their response to the consultation, the Committee were of the view that all Members should be given the opportunity to comment and, should there be sufficient interest, for a workshop to be held to discuss possible changes to the Code. A special meeting of the Committee will therefore take place on 6th June 2005 to consider any views expressed by Members and to conclude the response to the Board by the deadline of 17th June 2005.

#### **15. APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION**

Having regard to advice received from the Monitoring Officer, the Committee has granted dispensations to allow six Members of Alconbury Parish Council to speak and vote on those occasions when the Council is consulted on the Alconbury Flood Alleviation Scheme and any associated planning application during the period ending 30th April 2006. Applications for newly elected Councillors will need to be submitted should it be considered necessary after that date.

#### **16. LOCAL INVESTIGATION REGULATIONS**

In its report to the last meeting of the Council (Item No 10 refers) on the Regulations that enable local authority Monitoring Officers to investigate alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct, the Committee were concerned to ensure that the Council's insurers

would meet any legal costs that might accrue from the defence of any claim for defamation or damages awarded against an Investigating Officer or any other person mentioned in a report by that Officer.

The Committee were pleased to note that the Council's insurers have confirmed that existing policy arrangements will suffice for this purpose.

**17. MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT –  
STANDARDS BOARD NOTIFICATIONS**

In accordance with the procedure adopted by the Standards Board for England, the Committee has been informed that the Board has decided not to take any further action in relation to an allegation made against a District Councillor but to refer for full investigation two cases involving Members of Bluntisham and Oldhurst Parish Councils.

**18. CURRENT ISSUES**

The Committee has approved the attendance of their Chairman and Vice-Chairman (or their nominees), a representative of the Opposition Group on the Committee, an Independent Member and a Town/Parish Council representative at the fourth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees Conference to be held in Birmingham on 5th and 6th September 2005.

On this occasion, the conference to be entitled "In Your Hands", will focus on the work of Standards Committees in local government and will examine, among other things, good and bad practice, identify areas for improvement and consider what further support and guidance could be offered in the future.

D H Bristow  
Chairman