

# STANDARDS COMMITTEE

## UPDATE ON WORKLOAD OF STANDARDS BOARD AND LOCAL CASES

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007

### Report of Head of Legal and Human Resources/ Monitoring Officer

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the Committee on both the national and local position of the Standards Board workload.

**This report is public**

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) That the report be noted.

#### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report updates Members on the number and type of complaints dealt with by the Standards Board for England, and on the complaints submitted to the Standards Board in respect of City Councillors.

#### 2.0 The National Position

2.1 From the 1st April to the 31st October 2006, the Standards Board received 1996 allegations, compared with 2427 in the same period the previous year. Of these, 62% were made by members of the public, 32% by councillors, 4% by Council officers, and 2% by others.

2.2 19% of the allegations were referred for investigation; 81% were not.

2.3 Of the allegations referred for investigation, 49% related to parish councils, 24% to district councils, 11% to unitary councils, 8% to metropolitan councils, 4% to county councils, 3% to London boroughs, and 1% to other authorities.

2.4 Of the allegations referred for investigation, 27% related to prejudicial interests, 22% to bringing the authority into disrepute, 13% to failure to disclose a personal interest, 11% to a failure to treat others with respect, 11% to using position to confer or secure an advantage, 1% to failure to register a financial interest, and 15% other.

2.5 The outcome of investigation was no further action in 61% of cases, no evidence of a breach in 31%, 5% referred to the Monitoring Officer for local determination and 3% referred to the Adjudication Panel for England.

### **3.0 The Local Position**

3.1 At the last ordinary meeting of the Committee in December 2005, it was reported that there were currently 6 local cases being investigated; 4 by Ethical Standards Officers in respect of City Councillors and 2 by the then Monitoring Officer in respect of Parish Councillors.

3.2 Members will recall that the Committee considered the report in respect of the two parish councillors at its meeting on the 13th September 2006, and accepted the Monitoring Officer's findings that there had been no breach of the Code of Conduct.

3.3 The four cases investigated by the Ethical Standards Officers resulted in no further action. In one case only was there found to be a technical breach of the Code of Conduct. The allegations in these cases related to bringing the authority into disrepute, improperly securing an advantage, failing to treat others with respect, and prejudicial interest.

3.4 During 2006, nine allegations were made to the Standards Board in respect of seven City Councillors. These related to a failure to reply to correspondence, and to the declaration and registration of interests. In respect of eight of the allegations, the Standards Board decided that they should not be investigated. One was referred for local investigation, and the investigation is currently being undertaken by the Monitoring Officer.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications.

#### **SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Legal Services have been consulted and have no further comments.

#### **MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Standards Board Bulletin 31

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