



Standards Committee

**Wednesday, 7 June 2006 3.00 p.m.
Runcorn Town Hall**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David W R', is written over a faint, illegible stamp.

Chief Executive

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

**Mr John Collins (Chairman)
Councillor Stan Parker
Councillor Stephen Pearsall
Councillor Linda Redhead
Mr Tony Luxton
Parish Councillor Ronald Crawford
Councillor David Lewis
Councillor Mike Wharton**

Please contact Lynn Cairns on lynn.cairns@halton.gov.uk or 0151 424 2061 ext 1121 for further information.

The next meeting of the Committee is on Wednesday, 6 September 2006

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

Item No.	Page No.
1. MINUTES	
2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal or personal and prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached and (subject to certain exceptions in the Code of Conduct for Members) to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.	
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

REPORT TO: Standards Committee

DATE: 7th June 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate & Policy

SUBJECT: Standards Board Information Round Up

WARD(s): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To bring Members of the Committee up to date with the latest news from the Standards Board.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 I am attaching the latest bulletin from the Standards Board (number 28). There are a couple of points in the bulletin that I would wish to draw to the Committees attention.
- 3.2 Firstly, on page 1 of the Bulletin, members will see that the Standards Board are issuing some clarifying advice to the effect that where elected members simply have shared interests with their local community such interests would not in the normal course of events be prejudicial.
- 3.3 The Bulletin also deals on page 5 with the fall out from the high profile case in Islington. The Board seem to be taking the criticism over their handling of this case positively, and have made changes to their processes, and propose to make further changes in due course.
- 3.4 There is also a brief section in the bulletin dealing with monitoring officers submitting complaints and passing comments on the complaints being submitted. The Board are advising that Monitoring Officers should not express a view as they will risk being compromised and debarred from carrying out a local investigation into the matter.

4.0 POLICY FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

6.1 None

**7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

7.1 None.

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- 8 Access to information**
Amendments to Schedule 12A

Welcome to the latest edition of our *bulletin*, with news and guidance from the Standards Board for England.

In the past, we sent separate newsletters to monitoring officers and standards committee chairs. However, feedback has suggested to us that the two newsletters should be combined into one, and so this is the first joint edition of the *bulletin* which is being sent to everyone who has requested it.

We will welcome all views on the new format, so do let us know what you think of it.

David Prince, Chief Executive

The Code isn't a gag

There has been some confusion about the Code in the recent months. Some members appear to be unsure about the rules on declaring interests, particularly over whether they should remain in the room when matters in which they have an interest are being discussed. So the aim of this article is to clarify that issue.

The nub of the issue revolves around whether the subject under discussion is prejudicial. Not all matters in which a councillor may have a personal interest are necessarily prejudicial, although they should always be declared. If you decide that the matter is not prejudicial, you may stay in the meeting and speak and vote on it. It is only when the matter is prejudicial that you will need to leave the room while it is under discussion.

So how do you decide whether a matter in which you have a personal interest is also prejudicial?

A common scenario

A frequently asked question is about whether a personal and prejudicial interest arises if the matter being considered relates to the area in which the member lives or the ward that they represent.

The answer is as follows:

In some cases, members will have a personal interest because the matter may have some impact upon the residents of that area of the ward to a greater extent than others living in the area of the authority. However, the interest will only be prejudicial if it also has a significant impact upon themselves, or their friends or relatives or any of the other categories set out in paragraph 8(1)(a) to (d) of the Code, so that a reasonable member of the public would consider that their judgment of the public interest was prejudiced.

For instance, if a planning application is being considered for a piece of land in a member's ward that is situated directly opposite that member's property, there is likely to be a prejudicial interest.

But there will be many situations when you have a personal interest that is not prejudicial. So at those times, you will be able to fully participate and vote in the meetings, so long as you are seen to keep an open mind about the matter under discussion.

In our proposals to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for changes to the Code, we highlighted this area as one that needed particular reform. We feel that the situation needs greater clarity and that members should be ensured that they are able to advocate on behalf of those they represent.

We wish to see the Code make it crystal clear that, in the normal course of events, a member who merely has an interest shared with the community or an organisation they represent should be able to take part in a meeting. It would only be where a decision is being made and they would get a clear advantage from that decision that they should be excluded from taking part.

However, if you have already made up your mind about a particular decision before hearing all the arguments surrounding it, although this may not necessarily be a prejudicial interest, you may be advised not to take part in the decision-making process.

Business interests

Another issue that brings members into non-compliance with the Code is when he or she has a conflict of interest with regard to their business dealings, and does not declare it.

We advise members to exercise great care in such situations, particularly those working in the law or accounting.

While it is possible to put a barrier in place to separate their role as a member and their involvement in a firm or business that has dealings with the council, issues can arise when a member's firm or business obtains income or profit from work involving the council.

So members need to guard against ethical as well as financial conflicts of interest — and they also need to be seen to do this, so that their constituents can feel reassured on the subject.

This means that if you own a company and a major part of its work is council-related, you may want to rethink whether you can play a meaningful role in work of the authority.

It is important to take particular care in attending meetings, or in fulfilling your role as a member, that you do not use information and access to officers to further your own business interests.

For instance, you should give out your authority's business card, rather than your professional business one, when involved in authority business. In addition, you should not advertise the fact that you are a member when on your firm's business.

For further guidance on declaring interests, follow this link:



[www.standardsboard.co.uk/TheCodeofConduct/
FrequentlyaskedquestionsabouttheCode/
Declaringinterests/](http://www.standardsboard.co.uk/TheCodeofConduct/FrequentlyaskedquestionsabouttheCode/Declaringinterests/)

New — *The Case Alert* to be launched next month

Members and officers looking for best practice guidance on hearings will welcome next month's launch of *The Case Alert*.

The Case Alert will provide a regular in-depth analysis of significant cases and can be emailed directly to you.

These regular bulletins will keep you informed of noteworthy decisions by standards committees, the Adjudication Panel for England and the High Court, particularly where they shed new light on our understanding of the Code of Conduct.

The reports of cases in *The Case Alert* will be more detailed than the short case summaries on our website, and will build on the work in the annual *Case Review* in highlighting lessons from significant cases.

The Case Alert should be especially useful to monitoring officers and standards committees, but will also be of interest to anybody involved in working with the Code of Conduct.

So if you are interested in receiving *The Case Alert*, please send a message to: casealert@standardsboard.co.uk

As we move towards becoming a more strategic regulator, matters regarding local investigations are bound to be raised for guidance. So in this article, we provide some guidance on the final reports that follow local investigations.

Providing final reports to ethical standards officers

We would like you to send us final reports following local investigations, as they will help us in our new strategic role.

From those reports, we will be able to look into the processes used when conducting a local investigation, as well as the quality of the hearings held by standards committees. On top of that, we will be able to build a knowledge base from which we hope to be able to pick out examples of good practice to feed back to all authorities.

So, for those reasons, we are asking standing committees to send copies of these final reports to the ethical standards officer who referred the matter for investigation.

Disclosing final reports

In addition, we have had several queries from monitoring officers about the disclosure of final reports following local investigations. So here we will expand a little further on our local investigations guidance on this area.

As you will be aware, final reports produced following a local investigation are not confidential, and are not afforded the protection under section 63 of the *Local Government Act 2000* that is given to ethical standards officers' reports.

The Code of Conduct says that the final report must be sent to the subject member. In addition, whether or not there is a breach of the Code, it must also be sent to the standards committee.

On top of that, our local investigations guidance also provides that the final report should also be sent to the:

- person who made the allegation
- clerk of any relevant town or parish council
- ethical standards officer who referred the matter for investigation

Our guidance also states that final reports should be made available for public inspection at the authority unless they contain confidential or exempt

information as defined by Part VA of the *Local Government Act 1972* (as amended).

So you should consider whether any part of the final report and appendices (if any) contains confidential or exempt information. If so, that exempt information should not be disclosed to the public for inspection.

If the report has a finding of no breach of the Code, the final report must be considered by the standards committee and should be made available with the public agenda for the standards committee at least five clear days in advance of the meeting.

But if the report has a finding of a breach of the Code, the presumption is that standards committee hearings will be held in public unless exempt information will be discussed under Schedule 12A (as amended) of the *Local Government Act 1972*.

“ exempt information should not be disclosed to the public ”

Generally, the final report and appendices (if any) should be made available with the hearing's agenda at least five clear days before the hearing, in accordance with normal committee rules for disclosure of agenda reports. However, if a request is made in advance of the hearing for it to be held in private, the final report and appendices, and any other papers provided during the pre-hearing process, should not be published or distributed to members of the public or press before the hearing.

The notice of the hearing and an agenda (without accompanying reports or papers) should be the only documents made available to the public. The agenda should state that a request for the hearing to be held in private is to be decided as a preliminary issue.

The standards committee should then determine on the day of the hearing whether the whole or any part of the proceedings will be held in public or private. And if it is decided that the hearing is to be held in public, copies of the investigator's report and appendices should then be distributed to members of the public who may be present.

Councillor Dane disqualified

At a recent Adjudication Panel for England tribunal hearing, a councillor was disqualified for three years.

In the view of the case tribunal, Councillor Dane had conducted a relentless campaign of destructive criticism against the clerk and council members, which was carried out in bad faith and had serious consequences to the health and welfare of others. This campaign was conducted through a series of letters, internet postings, face-to-face encounters and newsletters.

The case tribunal also considered that Councillor Dane had made repeated and false claims regarding the existence of bullying and misconduct by fellow members.

After considering all the evidence and submissions, the case tribunal decided that Councillor Dane failed to treat others with respect and brought his office into disrepute.

As Councillor Dane's actions were considered to be serious, deliberate and sustained, and he did not show remorse or consideration for those he had affected, and had dishonestly denied responsibility for some of his actions, the case tribunal decided to disqualify him for three years.

You can read the case summary and the link to the full tribunal's decision by going to Case Summaries at www.standardsboard.co.uk/

Adjudication Panel reconsiders Adami case

At a case tribunal hearing on 24 June 2004, the Adjudication Panel for England considered the case of Councillor David Adami.

It was alleged that between April 2002 and January 2003, Councillor David Adami bullied and threatened council staff, was rude and demeaning to a senior officer, made unfounded allegations about officers, tried to reopen closed issues and was generally malicious in his behaviour.

It was also alleged that Councillor Adami tried to reopen a planning representation period so that he could lodge an objection, inappropriately sent

a letter to a barrister who was advising the council, unreasonably pursued matters with officers and made complaints when he felt these matters had not been addressed.

The Adjudication Panel decided that Councillor Adami had committed serious breaches of the Code of Conduct and disqualified him for four years.

Councillor Adami then appealed to the High Court and his appeal was upheld. The ethical standards officer appealed the High Court's decision, and on 21 November 2005 the Court of Appeal made an order. The order included the following:

"...the matter [the Tribunal's original decision] be remitted to the same Tribunal for reconsideration and formulation of adequate reasons for its decision on the Tribunal's findings of fact on the unchallenged evidence, that the Respondent had breached the Appellant's code of conduct, and as to the appropriate sanction in the light of these findings and reasons."

Case sent back to Panel

So on 30 January 2006, the same case tribunal considered and formulated adequate reasons for its decision that Councillor Adami had breached the code and the sanction.

It started from the point where the hearing ended and took into account only that evidence which was available to them at the close of the hearing.

After its reconsideration, the tribunal decided that Councillor Adami had committed serious breaches of the code that justified a substantial period of disqualification. Taking into account all relevant factors, including that Councillor Adami had already served approximately a one-year period of disqualification, the tribunal decided to disqualify him for a further period of two years from 30 January 2006.

You can read all the details of the case tribunal's revised decision on the Adjudication Panel for England's website, which can be reached by going to: www.adjudicationpanel.co.uk/

Islington

Those of you who read the local government trade press will have been aware of concerns expressed about our case against councillors from the London Borough of Islington that concluded in January.

The Adjudication Panel for England made a number of criticisms of the way that we carried out the investigation, and the Board has considered what lessons we can learn from the case.

The Board has now apologised to the parties concerned, in particular the Islington chief executive Helen Bailey, who was caught up in the investigation. It has also now expressed a clear view that officers caught up in cases should be told as much as possible about ongoing investigations. The Board has also expressed its regrets in particular for the effects of the delays during the investigation on Islington councillors who were investigated.

Changes introduced

However, this case was received in the Standards Board for England's early days. Since then, the Board has introduced a number of changes. These include:

- introducing a management framework to instil high standards in the investigations of the statutorily independent ethical standards officers
- a more focused approach to resourcing complex cases
- recruiting more staff with local government experience
- ensuring that evidence and documentation is generally available to witnesses and those being investigated in advance of interviews

The Board also committed to further change, specifically:

- seeking changes in legislation to enable wider disclosure of information concerning cases
- seeking changes to legislation to enable the Board to have an oversight of cases including a code of practice and quality control framework
- compliance checks, overseen by the chief executive, in regard to investigation planning, timeliness, interviews and presentation

- using differing employment models to bring in recent senior local government experience

The Board is clear that ethical standards officers should not be seen as prosecutors and that their role is to help the independent tribunal to arrive at the right decision. This means putting before it all relevant information, whether that information supports or undermines an allegation.

Parish representatives entitled to full standards committee role

Parish councillors should not be marginalised or under-used as they have a vital role to play on standards committees.

They can often produce another perspective on local matters and bring an independent breath of fresh air into debates.

So we've come up with a number of recommendations to ensure that parish representatives on standards committees are treated fairly, and they are as follows:

Parish pump pointers

- Parish councillors should have the same status and voting rights as other councillors and independent members.
- They should be entitled to any allowances and expenses that are available to other members of the committee.
- At least two parish representatives should be appointed to each committee. Having more than one helps guard against problems in the event that a member is unable to take part in a hearing due to a conflict of interest.
- Authorities should consider involving their county association in the nomination and selection process to ensure that the representatives have the support of the parish sector across the county, and are seen to have the backing of their representative body.
- Standards committees should also consider having parish representatives on hearing panels regardless of whether the hearing involves a town or parish councillor. As parish representatives, in many cases, are independent of the principal authority, they can bring a specific and objective perspective to the case that may be helpful.

What did you think of our new training DVD?

All monitoring officers will have now received their copy of our DVD: *Going Local: investigations and hearings*.

The DVD was issued at the start of the year, and is a training aid that offers advice on how to carry out investigations and organise hearings. We are pleased that many positive comments have been made about the programme. However, we are always keen to hear more from you.

For instance, did you find that the learning summaries were helpful? And did they prompt useful discussions on best practice?

Please email your comments to: rebecca.jones@standardsboard.co.uk

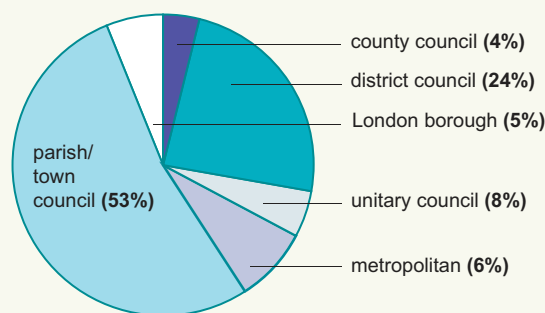
Additional copies of the DVD are available for £38.00 each. To place an order please contact the Communications office on 020 7378 5028, or email Rebecca Jones at the above address.

Referral and investigation statistics

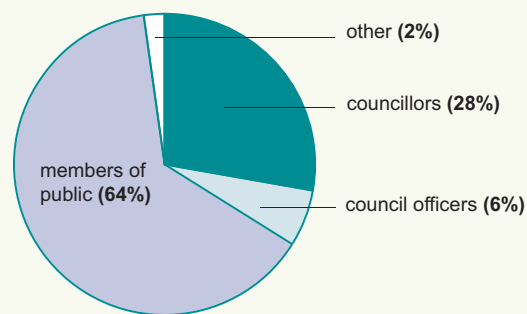
The Standards Board for England received 290 allegations in January and 281 in February, giving a running total of 3,520 for the current financial year.

The following charts show referral and investigation statistics for that period.

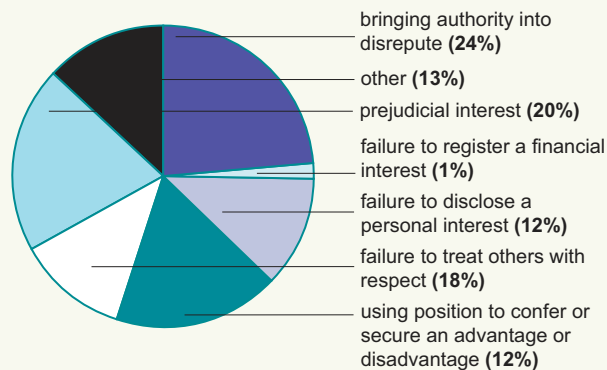
Authority of subject member in allegations referred for investigation



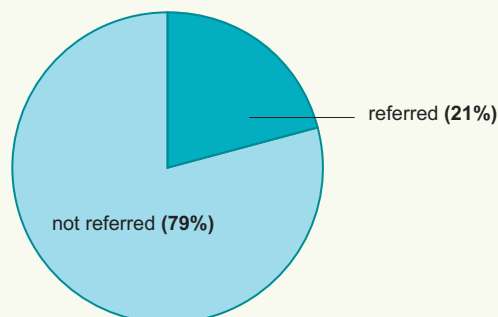
Source of allegations received



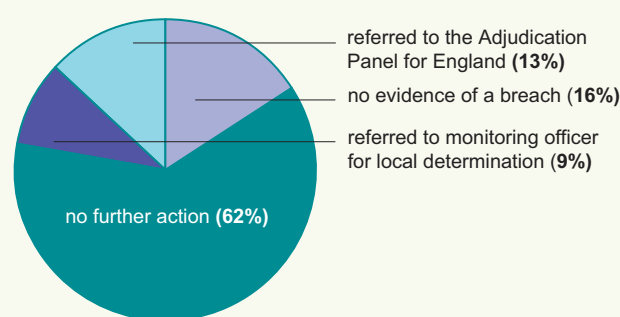
Nature of allegations referred for investigation



Allegations referred for investigation



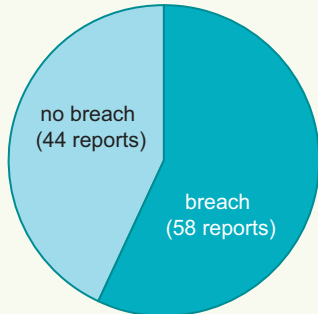
Final findings



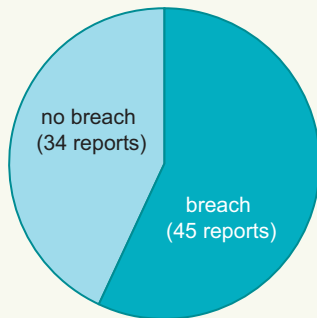
Local investigation statistics

Ethical standards officers referred 352 cases for local investigation between 1 April 2005 and 28 February 2006 — equivalent to 44% of all cases referred for investigation. Of those 352 cases, we have received 102 reports. The following charts illustrate the outcomes of those cases.

Monitoring officers recommendations following local investigations

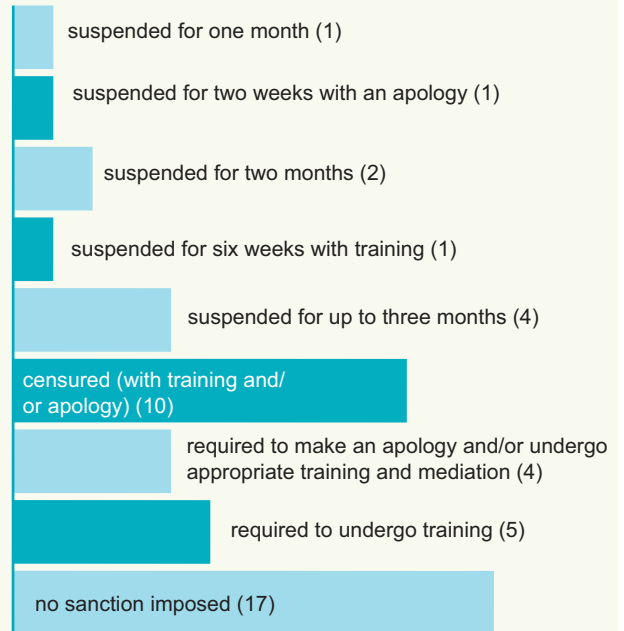


Of those 102 reports, 79 standards committees have met



- >> six instances where the standards committee disagreed with the monitoring officer
- >> four instances where the decision changed to NO at standards committee
- >> two instances where the decision changed to YES at standards committee

Standards committee determinations



- >> There have also been four appeals that went to the Adjudications Panel from local investigations.

Monitoring officers affecting local referrals

Ethical standards officers are finding that they are unable to consider referring some complaints for local investigation. This has occurred when the monitoring officer submitting the complaint has expressed his or her view as to whether the subject of the complaint had failed to comply with the Code of Conduct.

We consider that if monitoring officers express such a view when submitting a complaint, they risk being regarded as having compromised their discretion on the matter. The matter then can only be referred back for local investigation when the authority concerned has a reciprocal arrangement with another one on conducting investigations, a practice recommended in our guidance.

But this does not mean that we do not want to hear from the monitoring officer submitting the complaint.

For instance, we believe it is reasonable and indeed, helpful, for monitoring officers to set out in an allegation any advice that either they or the officers of their department have provided in respect of the behaviour that is the subject of the allegation.

However, if this has not happened, we also feel that it is better practice that no opinion should be expressed. The same advice relates to chairs of standards committees, although no examples of this have yet been noted.

Are you confident in your authority's ability to deliver on the ethical agenda? Are you feeling challenged by the changes that lie ahead with the revised Code of Conduct and a more locally focused system?

This year's Fifth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees, *Bridging the gap*, is taking place on 16 and 17 October in Birmingham, and will identify the gaps in resources, knowledge and experience required to deliver effective regulation of ethical standards at a local level.

Working together in a wide variety of sessions, we will then look at how we can bridge those gaps and move forward.

Attracting over 800 delegates, the conference is a rare and valuable opportunity to meet and network with standards committee members,

monitoring officers, council leaders and chief executives from across the country. Fringe events run by other organisations in the local government family also provide a chance to keep up-to-date with developments across the sector.

Bookings are already rolling in and places are filling up fast. So register now to make sure that you won't miss out on the most important event of the year for those who work with the Code of Conduct.

For more information and to reserve your place, call our event managers, Benedict Business Resources, on **01483 205 432** and they will send you an information pack. Or you can visit the conference website by following this link:

www.annualassembly.co.uk

Standards committees and access to information

There have recently been some amendments to Schedule 12A (access to information provisions) of the *Local Government Act 1972*. The amendments, which came into force on 1 March 2006, are contained in the *Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006* and the *Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) (Amendment) Regulations 2006*.

Parts 1 to 3 of the schedule to the order (which apply to authorities in England) replace the existing Schedule 12A.

It is intended that descriptions of information listed in Part 1 of Schedule 12A will be clearer and simpler, and some of the qualifications in part 2 of the schedule are replaced by a public interest test.

Authorities should note that there are significant differences between the categories of exempt information for England and those categories that apply to Wales.

The additional categories of exempt information introduced by the 2003 regulations are largely unaffected, although some of the amendments have been renumbered.

At-a-glance changes

The relevant paragraphs from the 2003 regulations are set out below, with the updated paragraph numbering shown in bold.

"Removed by the 2006 regulations. See paragraphs 1 and 2 in particular of the amended Part 1 to Schedule 12A.

17. **7A.** *Information which is subject to any obligation of confidentiality*
18. **7B.** *Information which relates in any way to matters concerning national security.*
19. **7C.** *The deliberations of a Standards Committee or a sub-committee of a Standards Committee established under the provisions of Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000 in reaching any finding on a matter referred under the provisions of section 60(2) or (3), 64(2), 70(4) or (5) or 71(2) of that Act."*

The main alteration is that the new regulations no longer contain a specific provision of 'Information relating to the personal circumstances of any person' (paragraph 16 of the 2003 regulations refer) as this is essentially covered by the provisions contained in paragraphs 1 and 2 of part 1 of the updated provisions.

For ease of reference, paragraph 1 refers to 'Information relating to any individual', while paragraph 2 refers to 'Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual'.

Change in guidance?

We have reviewed the guidance in light of the changes and consider that the substance does not need to be altered.

However, the wording of Schedule 12A currently set out in the Appendix 3 of the guidance should be read in accordance with the amendments.

We believe that it is in the public interest for hearings to be held in public, to ensure fairness and openness, and we recommend that they are wherever possible.

Standards committees will have a continuing obligation to consider the requirements of Articles 6 and 8 of *The European Convention on Human Rights* when holding local determination hearings.

Welcoming new members of the Board

We are delighted that Elizabeth Hall, Judy Simons and Paul Gott have joined the Board of the Standards Board for England, and here is a little about each of them.

Judy Simons

Judy Simons' background is in education and as Professor of English and Pro Vice Chancellor at De Montfort, she has responsibility for Quality and Standards. She chairs the University Human Research Ethics Committee, and is a board member of the Higher Education Academy and Chair of Council. In addition, she is also on the Strategic Committee for Leadership, Governance and Management at the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

Judy has chaired a number of national academic bodies, including the Council of University Deans of Arts and Humanities. She has also published

widely on literary studies and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a Fellow of the English Association.

Elizabeth Hall

Elizabeth Hall comes from the world of financial regulation. For the past ten years, she has worked for the UK's financial services watchdog, the Financial Services Authority, where she has specialised in consumer protection, complaints and financial capability.

Elizabeth is a member of the Queen Mary University of London Research Ethics Committee and of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Schools Forum and last year, she was appointed to London Travelwatch, the body that represents the views of London's transport users.

In addition, Elizabeth has several lay responsibilities in the Church of England, including chair of the Tower Hamlets Synod and an examining chaplain for the Stepney area.

Paul Gott

Paul Gott comes from a legal background where he practices as a barrister in commercial and employment law. A member of Fountain Court Chambers, he was appointed as junior counsel to the Crown in 1999 and appointed to the Treasury Counsel 'A' Panel in 2005.

His main areas of specialisation are strike action and discrimination as well as equal pay, on which he regularly advises government departments and private clients. He also works specifically in the areas of civil fraud, banking and accountants' negligence.

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DATE: 7th June 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate & Policy

SUBJECT: Annual Audit Letter – Members Interests

WARD(s): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To advise the Committee as to process in place for cross-checking Members' declarations of interests at meetings with the Members' Register of Interests.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

2.1 The report be noted, and

2.2 The Committee confirm that the arrangements for cross checking declarations of interest with the Register of Interests meet with their approval.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 As mentioned at the previous meeting of the Committee, the Audit Commission's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter suggested, inter alia, that the Council should develop its arrangements for monitoring compliance with the member (and officer) codes of conducts.

3.2 One of the ways that we are doing this is to cross reference declarations of interests at meetings with the Members' Register of Interests compiled under the Members' Code of Conduct. A system is in place (and has been in place for the past year) whereby the Committee and Member Services team undertake this task after meetings at which interests are declared. Any such interests are cross referenced with the Register to see whether there is any correspondence between the two.

3.3 Over the past year this exercise has shown that on all bar one occasion, interests declared at meetings corresponded with matters recorded in the Register of Interests. In relation to the one item for which there was no corresponding entry in the register, the declaration was nevertheless an appropriate one to have made under the Code, and the subject matter was an interest which did not require registration under the Code.

4.0 POLICY FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

5.1 Effective systems for recording interests need to be in place to ensure that the Council acts, and is seen to act, with proper regard for propriety. This is essential for public confidence in local government. Monitoring that the procedures for recording interests are effective is an important part of any such system.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

6.1 None.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2004/2005	Municipal Building	John Tradewell

DATE: 7th June 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate & Policy

SUBJECT: Standards Training Programme 2006/07

WARD(s): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek the Committees views on the training that should be put in place for 2006/07 for members of the Council and the Committee..

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

2.1 The Committee notes that training on the Code of Conduct has been given to new members as part of the Induction process, and

2.2 The Council Solicitor be asked to arrange a training seminar or seminars for all members of the Council (and new Members in particular) allowing members to explore the Code of Conduct in detail through the use of scenarios, and

2.3 The Council Solicitor be asked to arrange a training session for Members of the Committee on how local hearings should be conducted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The start of the new Municipal Year provides an opportune moment for the Committee to consider what training it would like to see put in place for members of the Council and the Committee itself in relation to Standards issues. It is suggested that there are training needs in the following areas:

- Induction of new Members – There is a need to introduce them to the Code at the earliest opportunity and to explain its requirements to them
- Training for the Standards Committee – There is a need to ensure that the Committee (and any new members on the Committee) is prepared to deal with complaints and hearings as and when they arise
- Training for members of the Council generally – There is a need to ensure that as many members of the Council as possible get refresher training on the Code of Conduct, as well as a need to ensure that new members in particular have an opportunity to explore the requirements of the code in some depth.

- 3.2 In relation to the induction of new Members, I have already carried out a session with the newly elected members to take them through the requirements of the Code. I would suggest, however, that the Committee does need to address the other two training needs mentioned above. In relation to the general training for members, we do have a course (which was developed with the assistance of Tony Luxton) which we have used with members on a number of occasions and which has been quite favourably received. It is suggested therefore that this be offered again to members (and the new members in particular) over the next few months.
- 3.3 Training for the Standards Committee itself is a little more complicated to organise. I would suggest that the primary training need is to ensure that the members of the Committee are prepared in case they need to hear a complaint. I would propose, therefore, to look into commissioning some training for the Committee, probably of a role-playing type, to take place sometime in the Autumn. (Members are reminded that we do have a Standards Board DVD that shows the local investigation and hearing process and this is available for any member that would like to view it.)
- 3.4 It should also be noted that the Annual Conference of Standards Committees in Birmingham (16th and 17th October) is also a tremendous training opportunity for members of Standards Committees.

4.0 POLICY FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 5.1 Training for members of the Council and the Committee is vital to ensure that the requirements of the Code are understood by all members, and to ensure that the Committee are properly prepared for their role in dealing with Complaints under the Standards Regime.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 6.1 None.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

- 7.1 None