

<i>COMMITTEE</i>	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
<i>DATE</i>	15 OCTOBER 2002
<i>TITLE OF REPORT</i>	UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT ISSUES
<i>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</i>	Mark Bowen, assistant director, legal and contract services

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 All relevant local authorities have either adopted the code of conduct or had it applied to them by default. The purpose of this report is to advise members of the committee on the work of the Standards Board in dealing with complaints and progress on the regulations to be made under section 66 of the Local Government Act 2000.

2 DECISION ISSUES

- 2.1 Whilst there are no specific decisions to be made based on the report, it is important that members are apprised of national developments relating to the code of conduct and matters within the remit of the committee.

3 RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 3.1 That the members' note the information contained in the report.

4 COMPLAINT HANDLING BY THE STANDARDS BOARD

- 4.1 As at the end of September the Standards Board for England had received 1200 complaints. 50% of these complaints relate to parish councils. 50% of all complaints received have been referred for further investigation.
- 4.2 To date, the ethical standards officers have not made any referrals to the Adjudication Panel for matters to be considered. Of completed investigations these have either indicated no evidence of a breach of the code or have required no further action. It is understood that the first cases will shortly be referred to the Adjudication Panel – several of these will relate to parish councillors not signing the register of interest. This will help give a national benchmark for handling such matters.
- 4.3 The Standards Board has given a commitment to produce guidance based on cases referred to it. In the interim the following percentage breakdown can be given of matters referred nationally for further investigation.

- Bringing the authority into disrepute 31%

- Not treating others with respect 28%
- Issues around prejudicial interests 12.5%
- Issues around personal interests 9.2%
- Obtaining a personal advantage through role as a councillor 7%
- Register of Interest issues 7%

4.4 There is roughly an even division between the matters which have been referred to the board by members of local authorities and those referred by members of the public.

5 THE SECTION 66 REGULATION

5.1 Consultation on the section 66 regulations led to over 1000 responses being submitted to the then Department of Local Government, Transport and the Regions. Draft regulations have been produced which are undergoing limited consultation. The intention is that the Standards Board will produce good practice guidance to supplement the regulations.

5.2 The intended date for publication for the regulations is during October – although a firm date has not been given. If copies of the regulations are available by the date of the meeting then these will be circulated to members of the committee by the monitoring officer.

6 FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct legal or financial implications arising from this report.

Background papers:

None