

Central Bedfordshire
Council
Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands,
Shefford SG17 5TQ



please ask for Martha Clampitt
direct line 0300 300 4032
date 13 January 2011

NOTICE OF MEETING

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date & Time

Friday, 21 January 2011 9.30 a.m.

Venue at

Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford

Richard Carr
Chief Executive

To: The Chairman and Members of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE :-

Councillors: P Rawcliffe(Vice-Chairman), Mrs J G Lawrence,
A A J Rogers, J Street and G Summerfield

Independent Persons: Mr K Ford(Chairman), Mr J Dann, Mr K Frazer,
Mr M Jones and Miss D C Maggs (Vice-Chairman)

Town and Parish Representatives: Mr B Collier, Dr W J Eilbeck, Ms J Hughes,
Mr J Lewis and Mr B Saunders

Other Members of the Council – as requested.

All other Members of the Council - on request

MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND THIS MEETING

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence.

2. **Minutes**

To approve as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on .

(previously circulated)

3. **Members' Interests**

To receive from Members declarations and the **nature** thereof in relation to:-

- (a) Personal Interests in any Agenda item
- (b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests in any Agenda item

4. **Public Participation**

To deal with general questions and statements from members of the public in accordance with the scheme of public participation set out in Annex 1 to Part A4 of the Constitution.

REPORTS

Item	Subject	Page Nos.
5	Notifications of Gifts and Hospitality declared by Central Bedfordshire Members To update the Committee on gifts and hospitality declared by Central Bedfordshire Council Members from 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010.	* 5 - 8
6	Update on Current Standard Matters To advise Members on the latest position relating Assessment, Reviews and Hearings.	* 9 - 12

7 **Update on "Localism Bill"**

* 13 - 18

To give preliminary consideration to the implications of the "Localism Bill".

Verbal update

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Meeting: Standards Committee
Date: 21 January 2011
Subject: Notifications of Gifts and Hospitality declared by Central Bedfordshire Members
Report of: Monitoring Officer
Summary: To update the Committee on gifts and hospitality declared by Central Bedfordshire Councils Members from September to December 2010.

Contact Officer: John Atkinson – Monitoring Officer/Head of Democratic & Legal Services
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Non-executive
Reason for urgency (if appropriate) N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee notes the declarations of gifts and hospitality received by Central Bedfordshire Members as set out at Appendix “A” to this report.

1. Attached at Appendix “A” to this report Members will find a summary of gifts and hospitality declared by Central Bedfordshire Council Members since the Committee’s last meeting.
2. Members are aware that their declarations are held in the public domain and their interests declarations are a requirement of the Code of Conduct.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Contributes to all Council priorities to ensure good governance

Financial:

N/A

Legal:

To ensure declarations are made in accordance with the Code of Conduct are maintained and disclosed in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

Risk Management:

N/A

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

N/A

Equalities/Human Rights:

None

Community Development/Safety:

N/A

Sustainability:

N/A

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands

Appendix "A"

**Declarations notified to the Monitoring Officer
in respect of Gifts and Hospitality received by
Central Bedfordshire Members**

Date of gift or hospitality	Description of gift/ hospitality	Date notified to Monitoring Officer
8 September 2010	Reception – CCN	8 September 2010
14 September 2010	Reception – Local Government Leadership	14 September 2010
15 September 2010	Lunch - Neil Watkins, Whites Consultants Ltd	15 September 2010

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Meeting: Standards Committee
Date: 21 January 2011
Subject: Update on Current Standard Matters
Report of: Monitoring Officer
Summary: To advise Members on the latest position relating Assessment, Reviews and Hearings

Contact Officer: John Atkinson, Monitoring/Head of Democratic & Legal Services
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Non-executive
Reason for urgency (if appropriate) N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee receive and note the report.

1. The report set out at Appendix "A" shows the current position relating to code of conduct cases, together with information about any further complaints received by the Standards Committee.
2. Members are requested to receive and note this report.
3. At Appendix "B" a table setting out the numbers of matters dealt with by individual Members is attached for information.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Contributes to all Council priorities to ensure good governance

Financial:

N/A

Legal:

To ensure high ethical conduct within the Council in accordance with the requirements of the Ethical Framework as set out in the Local Government Act 2000

Risk Management:

N/A

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

N/A

Equalities/Human Rights:

None

Community Development/Safety:

N/A

Sustainability:

N/A

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands

Central Bedfordshire Council Standards Committee Matters

Case Ref No	Type of Hearing	Town/Parish Council or CBC Member	Date received.	Outcome
CBC9	A H	Town Council and CBC	11 December 2009	Referred for Investigation Hearing held on 27 May 2010 Paragraph 3(1) - breached Paragraph 3(2)(b) - breached Paragraph 5 - breached Sanction: 2 months suspension. Appeal to First Tier Tribunal: Appeal partially upheld. Sanction upheld. Appeal to Upper Tier Tribunal Permission refused 5 January 2011.
CBC13	A H	CBC	18 February 2010 28 January 2011	Referred for Investigation.
CBC17	A R	Town Council and CBC	7 September 2010 14 October 2010	Referred for investigation
CBC19	A	CBC	14 October 2010	Referred for investigation
CBC20	A	Parish Council	5 November 2010	No action
CBC21	A	Parish Council	5 November 2010	No action
CBC22	A	Town Council	5 November 2010	Referred for investigation
CBC23	A	Town Council	5 November 2010	Referred for investigation
CBC24	A	Parish Council	13 January 2011	
CBC25	A	CBC	13 January 2011	

Assessment (A)
Review (R)
Hearing (H)

List of Members undertaking Sub-Committee (Initial Assessments), Reviews and Pre-Hearings and Hearings

		Initial Assessments	Reviews	Pre-Hearing	Hearing
Independent Member	Mr K Ford	11	3	1	1
	Miss D Maggs	8	1		1
	Mr J Dann	5	1		
	Mr K Frazer	2	1	2	2
	Mr M Jones	9	2	1	2 + *
Elected Member	P Rawcliffe	10			2
	Mrs J G Lawrence	5	3		2
	A A J Rogers	12	2	1	2
	J Street	3	2	2	2*
	G Summerfield	2			
Town/Parish Member	Mr B Collier	11	1	1	1
	Dr W J Eilbeck	12	4	1	1 + *
	Ms J Hughes	3	1		1*
	Mr J Lewis apart from	7 (2 cases as an elected member for Shadow Council)		1	1
	Mr B Saunders (newly appointed)			2	1 (observer) + 1

* Hearing could have occurred but not required as Investigator's report accepted. No Action.

as at 6 January 2011

To: Standards Committee Chairs

30 November 2010

Dear colleagues

I would like to draw your attention to a letter sent to me from the Local Government Minister, Bob Neill MP about the Government proposals for the future of standards in local government. This letter has now been published on both our and CLG's website.

As you will know, since the Coalition Government announced its intention 'to abolish the Standards Board regime', there has been little detail available about what this would mean in practice. The letter from the Minister now sets out the proposition in greater detail.

In brief, you will see that the proposal is that, alongside the abolition of Standards for England, the First Tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England) would lose jurisdiction over member conduct. The Government also intends to remove the national Code of Conduct for councillors and the requirement to have a standards committee. Instead it would be for councils themselves to choose whether or not they wish to have a local code or a standards committee (which would be an 'ordinary committee' of the authority and therefore not need to have independent representation). Any standards committee would no longer have the power to suspend a member. There would also be a new criminal offence created relating to failure to register or declare interests.

In the meantime, you will see that these proposals will need primary legislation. Our understanding is that the Decentralisation and Localism Bill, which would contain such provisions, will be introduced to Parliament by the end of the year. The current framework will continue in place until such time as the bill receives Royal Assent and the relevant provisions are enacted. Our understanding is that

this is likely to be some time in the summer or autumn next year, although exact timing will obviously depend upon Parliamentary progress of the bill as a whole. Consequently, in the meantime, as the Minister recognises, standards committees will continue to have a legal requirement to operate as now and, in particular, to continue to consider any allegations.

You will see that the Minister's letter sets out, in some detail, the transition arrangements that they intend to apply to any cases which will be in the pipeline at the end of the framework. While these proposals obviously depend on Parliamentary approval, in brief, Standards for England would cease to handle cases from an Appointed Day (likely to be two months after the coming into force of the provisions). At that stage, all cases still open would be passed back to the relevant local authority to complete. Any cases with the Tribunal at that stage would be completed but no further references could be made to it. Any cases being handled locally would need to be completed locally after that date by the standards committee, with no power to pass them to Standards for England or the Tribunal, but no new allegations could be made after the Appointed Day.

I hope that you find this helpful.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Chilton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Chilton
Chair



Dr. Robert Chilton

Bob Neill MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

**Department for Communities and Local
Government**
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www.communities.gov.uk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Robert Chilton".

15 OCT 2010

Conduct of local authority members

Recently Andrew Stunell announced the broad package of changes that we intend to put in place to abolish the Standards Board regime. A press notice relating to this announcement is available on the Department's web-site at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/157558411>

When we met on Wednesday 15 September, I undertook to let you have the details of what we are proposing once the package of changes was announced, and accordingly I enclose a short paper setting out the changes we intend to make.

I would of course be very happy to discuss these with you and your Committee. If you would like a meeting, please don't hesitate to get in touch with my office.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Neill".

A printed signature in black ink, appearing to read "BOB NEILL MP".



Abolition of the Standards Board regime

The Standards Board regime

The Coalition Agreement *Our Programme for Government* included the commitment to “abolish the Standards Board regime”.

The Government considers that the Standards Board regime, consisting of a centrally prescribed model code of conduct, standards committees with the power to suspend a local authority member and regulated by a central quango was inconsistent with the principles of localism. In addition there is a concern that the regime is a vehicle for vexatious or politically motivated complaints.

The Government considers that it is the right and the responsibility of the electorate to determine who represents them and that the abolition of the regime will restore power to local people.

Accordingly, given the interdependencies of the bodies, requirements and guidance that constitute the Standards Board regime, the Government is proposing to abolish the regime in its entirety.

Subject to Parliament approving the necessary legislation, the changes are as follows:

- The Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001, which sets out the principles which govern the conduct of members and co-opted members of relevant authorities in England and police authorities in Wales, will be revoked.
- The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 (S.I 2007/1159) which prescribes the model code of conduct to apply to members of relevant authorities, will be revoked.
- The requirement for local authorities to have standards committees will be abolished.
- Standards for England (formally known as the Standards Board for England) will be abolished. Established by the Local Government Act 2000 and the regulator for local authority standards committees, the Standards Board requires primary legislation to abolish it and its legislative functions. None of the Standards Boards functions will be transferred to other bodies.

- The First-tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England), the independent judicial tribunal established as a disciplinary body to hear and determine references and appeals concerning the conduct of local authority councillors, will lose its jurisdiction over the conduct of local authority members.

It is intended to effect the abolition of the Standards Board regime through the Localism Bill. It is anticipated that the Bill will be laid before Parliament in December and will receive Royal Assent late-2011.

The present conduct regime (a model code governing local authority members' conduct and enforced through local authority standards committees, regulated in turn by the Standards Board for England), will continue to function in a normal manner, considering, investigating and determining allegations of misconduct, until a fixed date ("the appointed day"), probably two months after the Bill receives Royal Assent,.

This means that until the appointed day, an allegation of misconduct can be made; after the appointed day, no further allegations of misconduct can be made under the standards board regime. It also means that at the appointed day, allegations will be in the process of investigation and, further, that appeals against sanctions will be pending. Transitional measures will be put in place to address this.

Proposed transitional measures

Any cases in the system at the appointed day will make their way through a transitional regime. This would meet the expectation of those who had made allegations that their allegations would be properly dealt with. It also enables that if a member has an allegation made against them, they should have the opportunity to clear their name.

The Government propose that any investigations being undertaken by Standards for England transfer, on the appointed day, to the local authority that referred the investigation. It will be for that local authority to arrange for the conclusion of the investigation. The local authority's standards committee will remain established until the last complaint it is considering, referred either internally or from Standards for England, has been dealt with.

Any cases with which the First-tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England) is dealing on the appointed day will be concluded by that tribunal. It will not receive any appeals against standards committee rulings after that date.

The right of appeal will not exist for those cases standards committees deal with as they work their way through the transitional system. The Government considers that the risk of protracted proceedings justifies this approach. The sanctions available to standards committees are significantly less severe than the sanctions available to the First-tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England).

Further, the Government propose that the suspension sanction is removed from standards committees for the transitional period. Hence the most a standards

committee could do is, for instance, to issue a councillor with a censure or a request that they undergo training.

The conduct regime in a post-Standards Board world

The Government is committed to maintaining high standards of conduct in office and will ensure that, in the absence of a statutory code of conduct, councillors do not abuse their office for personal gain by putting their personal interests before those of the general community or local area that they represent. Members will be required to continue to register and declare personal interests and will not be allowed to use their position improperly for personal gain. The Government intend that wilful failure to comply with these requirements will constitute a criminal offence.

The requirement for local authorities to adopt a model code of conduct and for local authority members to abide by that code will be abolished. However, local authorities will be free to adopt their own, voluntary code of conduct should they so wish.

The requirement to maintain a standards committee will be abolished. However, local authorities will be free, should they choose, to establish voluntary standards committees to consider complaints about the conduct of elected and co-opted members. Such committees will, according to councils' local constitutions, be able to censure but will not be able to suspend or disqualify members from council membership.

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