

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

31ST AUGUST 2005

COMPLAINTS MADE TO STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND

RICHARD LONG, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

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1. To report to Members the creation of a database of complaints referred to the Standards Board for England.

RECOMMENATION

2. That Members note the creation of the database.

BACKGROUND

3. Following the introduction of the Local Government Act 2000 the Standards Board for England was established. All complaints alleging a breach of the National Code of Conduct are referred to the Standards Board for England.
4. On receipt of a complaint, there are a number of actions available to the Standards Board. The complaint can be rejected at the initial stage, it can be referred to an Ethical Standards Officer for investigation or it can be referred to the Authority's Monitoring Officer for investigation.
5. It is considered to be good practice for an Authority to establish a database detailing the complaints received by the Standards Board. The database can be viewed either by the Councillors name or the Standards Board Case Reference Number. The database identifies the Councillor, the Case Number, the date the Council received the allegation, the nature of the allegation, the date of completion and the outcome.

6. There is, however, an issue regarding confidentiality. Whilst a matter is under investigation by the Standards Board, it is confidential and anybody who releases information could be committing a criminal offence. However, once an investigation has been completed the details are made public by the Standards Board. The Standards Board does not, however, publicise those complaints it has decided not to investigate. That, however, does not mean the information is confidential, it merely means that the Standards Board does not publish it.

BACKGROUND

There are no background papers.

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