

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**6<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2007**

**STANDARDS BOARD BULLETIN**

**RICHARD LONG, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

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**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To update Members in respect of the latest bulletin issued by the Standards Board for England dated February 2007.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. That the report be noted.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The Standards Board for England regularly issues a bulletin to update people on the latest developments regarding ethical standards. The Bulletin has been electronically distributed to Members and this report highlights the more salient points.

Code of Conduct

4. The Government has started its consultation process on amendments to the Model Code of Conduct. A report elsewhere on the agenda deals with the matter.

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill

5. This Bill fulfils the Government's commitment to put a framework in place which allows local Standards Committees to deal with all aspects of the receipt and determination of allegations that a member has breached the Code of Conduct, thus allowing the Board to take on a more strategic role.

The main provisions of the Bill in relation to standards are as follows:

- Standards Committees will be responsible for the receipt of allegations and determining whether they should be investigated. If they are to be investigated, it needs to be decided whether it will be undertaken by the monitoring officer or the Standards Board.
- Standards Committees must be chaired by an independent member.
- There will be a duty on Standards Committees to provide periodic information to the Standards Board about the allegations the Standards Committee has received and how it has dealt with them.
- The Secretary of State will make regulations for the circumstances in which the Standards Board can suspend a Standards Committee from deciding whether allegations should be investigated.
- Standards Committees will be allowed to undertake joint working for some or all of their responsibilities.
- There will be a general power to allow the creation of Sub Committees to deal with any of the functions of a Standards Committee.
- The provisions regarding confidentiality of reports are to be relaxed to allow information to be shared with Standards Committees.
- A Standards Committee will be able to refer a report to the Adjudication Panel for England if it considers that the sanctions available to it are insufficient. The sanctions available to the Adjudication Panel for England are also to be widened to include lower level sanctions. This will allow it to deal with any reports that are referred to it.

#### Guidance Programme for 2007

6. The Board is working on the specific details of its code guidance programme for 2007. This will include a new DVD to help Local Authorities train Members. The DVD will explain revisions to the Code using dramatised scenarios. In addition the Board will issue guidance in the written form including a general guide to the revised Code and a detailed guide in respect of declaration of interests.
7. A Case Review will be published which will contain specific guidance on the new bullying provisions.

#### Roadshows

8. The Standards Board will be hosting a series of Roadshows focussing on the revised Code of Conduct and preparing for the local filter system for complaints in 2008. The format will be presentations, discussions, questions and answers.
9. The two venues nearest to Middlesbrough are York, 7<sup>th</sup> June and Newcastle, 12<sup>th</sup> June.

Livingstone

10. The Bulletin also deals with advice following the Ken Livingstone case and this is also dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Bulletin February 2007