



Ethical Standards Bulletin

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

Ethical Standards Bulletin – Winter 2009/2010

Welcome to the latest edition of the Ethical Standards Bulletin. This Bulletin is distributed to elected members from Telford & Wrekin Council, Parish and Town Councils in the Borough of Telford & Wrekin and members of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority.

Support for Code of Conduct

There's a high - and growing - level of support among councillors for the national Code of Conduct covering their behaviour.

Councillors and council officers recognise the importance of high standards to local democracy, and they are increasingly supportive of the work of the Standards Board for England, the national regulator of councillor behaviour.

The Standards Board for England researches the views of councillors and council officers every two years.

This year's survey shows support for the Code of Conduct and the local standards framework is at an all time high:

- 94% support the need for members to

- More than 70% feel that it is right for complaints to be handled locally
- 89% are confident that their authority is doing a good job of upholding standards
- Four times as many agree as disagree that 'member's standards of behaviour have improved over recent times.'




<p>sign up to the Code, an increase of 10% since 2004</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 83% consider maintaining high standards of behaviour to be one of the most important issues facing local government <p>government amongst the public, and those who are satisfied with the work of the organisation has grown by 17% since 2004.</p> <p>Dr Robert Chilton, the Chair of the Standards Board said: “This is a very encouraging set of results. At a time when public trust in politicians is under serious challenge, and standards matter more than ever, they show</p>	<p>Results also show that 77% think the Standards Board has been successful in defining standards of behaviour for councillors, an increase of 12% since 2004.</p> <p>The Standards Board is also seen to be more successful in improving the reputation of local</p> <p>that local government is leading the way, embracing the high standards of conduct, transparency and accountability that the public has every right to expect.</p> <p>“The Standards Board will continue to support authorities in this essential work, providing the expert, independent national scrutiny needed to protect standards and boost public confidence in local democracy.”</p>
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New Regulations Issued

<p>The Government has issued new Regulations in respect of the ethical framework in local government. The Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009 (SI:1255) set out three main provisions:-</p> <p>Firstly, the power for the Standards Board for England to intervene if they consider that a Standards Committee is not undertaking its duties effectively, including the power to suspend the assessment functions of a standards committee.</p>	<p>Secondly, a change in the rules in respect of the granting of dispensations by Standards Committees. We have updated the dispensation application form and produced some guidance which will be circulated shortly.</p> <p>Thirdly, provision for the establishment of joint standards committees.</p> <p>The Standards Board for England has issued guidance in respect of these changes and this is available from the Standards Board website at www.standardsforengland.gov.uk/TheCodeofConduct/Guidance/</p>
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A recent case from the Standards Board

<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Three-year ban for Dartmouth councillor</p> <p>A Dartmouth Town councillor was disqualified for three years following a Standards Board for England investigation.</p>	<p>officer, treating a council officer and several councillors with disrespect, and bringing his office and the council into disrepute.</p> <p>Councillor Boughton, who is also a former member of South Hams District Council, was alleged to have bullied and undermined the Dartmouth town clerk over a long period. He subjected the clerk at one stage to almost</p>
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The Adjudication Panel for England, an independent judicial tribunal, agreed with the Standards Board's ethical standards officer that Councillor Brian Boughton had breached the Code of Conduct by bullying a council

Councillor Boughton's conduct at council meetings, attended by the local press and the general public, was often aggressive, and was so disruptive that on one occasion, a senior police officer attending the meeting believed it to be verging on public disorder and considered intervening.

He was also disrespectful to other members, referring to the mayor as a 'bloody hypocritical bitch', and claiming in a letter to a new member that two of their fellow councillors were showing 'signs of serious dementia'. Council staff found his discussions with other members so heated that they had to ask for the conversations to be held elsewhere, as they disturbed the running of the council office.

daily visits in the council's offices, during which he would frequently become aggressive, angry and intimidating in front of officers and members. He also repeatedly accused the clerk of incompetence, to his face and to others.

Dr Robert Chilton, chair of the Standards Board, said: "Councillor Boughton's conduct was not only personally distressing to a number of individuals, but also brought his office and authority into disrepute and affected the smooth running of the council.

"People have every right to expect high standards from those elected to represent them, and in falling so far short of those standards, Councillor Boughton has seriously undermined the public's trust and confidence in local democracy. The three-year disqualification recognises this, and sends a clear message to the electorate that councillors who breach the Code of Conduct can be brought to account."

Code of Conduct Training

Following feedback from the last Code of Conduct training, a revised programme has been developed with the Standards Committee for 2010. Improvements have been made to the format of each session which will now include workshops using real case scenarios. The training will be provided by Weightmans Solicitors at the following venues and dates:-

Monday 22nd February 2.00 – 4.30 p.m. – Holiday Inn, Telford

Monday 22nd February 6.00 – 8.30 p.m. – Whitehouse Hotel, Wellington

Tuesday 2nd March 6.00 – 8.30 p.m. – Jubilee House, Madeley

To book a place please contact Emma Price, Senior Member Services Officer on 01952 380110 or emma.price@telford.gov.uk

Next Edition of the Bulletin

A new Bulletin will be circulated in Spring 2010. The aim of the Bulletin is to keep all members up to date with current issues and changes in respect of Ethical Standards matters. If there are any issues which you would like to see addressed in the Bulletin then please let us know. Contact details are set out below.

CONTACTS DETAILS

- **For Parish and Town Councillors** you should in the first instance contact your local parish/town clerk.
- **For members of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority** please contact Mrs Sharon Lloyd, Corporate Services Manager at Brigade Headquarters (telephone number 01743 260210) or sharon.lloyd@shropshirefire.gov.uk
- **For all queries from Telford & Wrekin Councillors** the points of contact are set out below:-

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