

## REPORT OF THE CLERK AND MONITORING OFFICER

# ELEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

### 1 Purpose

To provide details of the contents of the Eleventh Annual Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

### 2 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

### 3 Summary

The Committee for Standards on Public Life has released its Eleventh Annual Report. Aspects of the Report relate to the Code of Conduct for Elected Members and the proposed changes both to the Code of Conduct and the procedure for investigating and determining alleged breaches of the Code.

### 4 Background

The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established under the chairmanship of The Right Honourable the Lord Nolan by the then Prime Minister, The Right Honourable John Major, in October 1994 with the following terms of reference:

“To examine current concerns about standards of conduct of all holders of public office, including arrangements relating to financial and commercial activities, and make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements which might be required to ensure the highest standard of propriety in public life”



## **5 Details of the Eleventh Annual Report**

On 9 March 2006 the Committee on Standards and Public Life released its Eleventh Annual Report. The previous annual report (which formed the basis of a report to this Committee on 24 March 2005) made recommendations in respect of proposed changes to the Code of Conduct for Members, and the way in which alleged breaches of the Code were reported, investigated and determined (proposing a more locally based system). Similar to the previous report, the Eleventh Annual Report deals with a number of different standards issues, many of which do not directly relate to Local Government. Accordingly, this report provides a summary of those issues, which will be of particular interest to this Committee.

The Government has, in most part, agreed to accept the recommendations initially set out in the Tenth Annual Report, following the public consultation by the Standards Board for England and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Select Committee Report. The Government's intentions were set out in its discussion paper "Standards of Conduct and English Local Government; The Future", which was the subject of a report presented to this Committee on the 24 January 2006.

In the Eleventh Report of the Committee for Standards and Public Life Sir Alistair Graham, the Chair of the Committee, refers to the proposed transformation of the Standards Board for England to a Strategic Regulator and the radical change for the system of complaining against Local Government Councillors and describes the Government's welcoming of his previous proposals as "good news". The Report states that part of one of the Committee's prioritised themes for the next year will be the transformation of the Standards Board for England from a monopoly and volume complaints handler into a Strategic Body, overseeing the operation of local standards committees with independent chairs adjudicating on complaints against Councillors in their own communities.

The Report also sets out the Committee's intention to undertake a review of the Seven Principles of Public Life - selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. These were originally set out in the Committee's First Report in 1995 and form the basis (whether in original or amended form) for virtually all Codes of Conduct for public office holders, elected and appointed, in the United Kingdom (including the Model Code of Conduct adopted by Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority).

The Report states that research published in 2002 and 2004 demonstrated that the Seven Principles broadly reflect the current views and priorities of the public but that the language used to describe the Seven Principles is perceived by the public as somewhat arcane and inaccessible. In addition, the quantity of research indicates that the public places a high priority on a much broader definition of "honesty" than currently described by the Seven Principles. As a result the Committee has commissioned an independent research body for the review, which will publish its report later in 2006.

## **6 Legal Comment**

The Committee on Standards in Public Life acts in an advisory capacity to the Government. There are no legal implications, as yet, to the information contained within their latest report



## 7 Background Papers

Annual Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life – 2005

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balance Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Equality and Diversity		Retained	
Efficiency Savings		Risk and Insurance	
Environmental		Staff	
Financial		Strategic Planning	
Fire Control/Fire Link		West Midlands Regional Management Board	

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