

MEETING:	COUNCIL
DATE:	18 NOVEMBER 2011
TITLE OF REPORT:	REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2011
REPORT BY:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE

CLASSIFICATION: Open

MEMBERSHIP: David Stevens (Independent Member) (Vice-Chairman); Olwyn Barnett (Local Authority representative), Jake Bharier (Independent Member); Chris Chappell (Local Authority representative), Isabel Fox (Independent Member); Richard Gething (Town and Parish Council Representative); Mary Morris (Town and Parish Council Representative);.

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To inform Council about the activities of the Committee and its Sub-Committees and the future of the standards framework.

Recommendation

THAT: the report be noted.

Chairman

1. On 31 July 2011 Mr Robert Rogers resigned as Chairman and Independent Member of the Standards Committee. Mr Rogers has been appointed as Clerk of the House of Commons and Chief Executive of the House Service and is no longer able to devote the necessary time to the Committee. Mr Rogers has chaired the Committee from its inception in early 2002 and has played a major role in the development of the Council's ethical standards framework since that time. We are indebted to him for his help advice and leadership and wish him every success in his new parliamentary role.

Dispensations

2. We have granted a dispensation to four members of Garway Parish Council in relation to the Garway Village Hall Management Trust; and three members of Colwall Parish Council in relation to the Walwyn Meadow Management Trust.

The Future of the Local Government Standards Framework

3. The Decentralisation and Localism Bill is currently being considered by the House of Lords, and is due to receive royal assent towards the end of the year. The Bill includes proposals to abolish the Standards Board regime and as a result it is likely that Standards for England will cease to investigate complaints in late 2011 or early 2012. Until such time as the new legislation is passed, the statutory framework remains operative and complaints are still being dealt with by the Standards Committee in the same way.

The proposals will have a considerable affect upon the ethical standards framework both at a national and a local level and the Committee has been looking at how the Council could deal with this area in the future. A working group has been established to formulate a suggested approach about standards and ethics in Herefordshire and the future role of the Standards Committee, having regard to the proposals contained in the Localism Bill and any amendments made by Parliament. A report on the findings of the Group will be submitted to Council's Group Leaders in due course.

Local Filter Cases and Determinations

4. We have reviewed progress made with complaints about local authority, town and parish councillors since the introduction of the local filter on 08 May 2008. In 2008, 18 complaints were considered, 50 in 2009, 31 in 2010, and to date in 2011, 58.

Background Papers

- Agenda for the Standards Committee Meeting held on 14 October 2011.

**DAVID STEVENS
VICE-CHAIRMAN
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**