

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE TENTH REPORT "GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT : IMPLEMENTING STANDARDS OF CONDUCT IN PUBLIC LIFE"

Report By: County Secretary and Solicitor

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To note the recommendations of the Committee's Tenth Inquiry launched in January 2004 which looked at a number of areas including:
 - the management and enforcement of codes of conduct including declarations of interest across local government, the national health service and other public bodies.

Background

2. The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established in October 1994 by the then Prime Minister in response to concerns about standards in public life. It was given wide ranging terms of reference to examine current concerns about the standards of conduct of all holders of public office. The Committee has published nine reports covering virtually all elected and appointed public office holders.
3. The Committee's Tenth Inquiry was launched in January 2004 to examine the administrative procedures which flow from the implementation of the various recommendations of the Committee since it was established a decade earlier. The Committee wished to know whether the procedures and processes set up have been "effective, proportional and not excessive to the objects of the exercise".
4. The selected areas for inquiry were:
 - Appointments and re-appointments to public bodies (not the civil service);
 - The management and enforcement of codes of conduct including declarations of interest across local government, the national health service and other public bodies; and
 - Whether the seven principles of public life are being embedded into organisational culture and what steps are being taken to ensure that this involves the appropriate use of training and development and is more than a box-ticking exercise.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Marie Rosenthal, County Secretary and Solicitor on (01432) 260200

The Ethical Standards Framework for Local Government

5. The published Summary of the Tenth Report will be circulated separately to members of the Committee. However, the Report concludes:

The Committee on Standards in Public Life have concluded that although improvements can and should be made to the existing system for handling complaints under the Model Code of Conduct, the framework must move to locally based arrangements for the initial handling, investigation and determination of all but the most serious cases. Only by local ownership and involvement can issues of ethical organisational culture be properly addressed and the overall regulatory framework for standards in local government made proportionate and strategic.

6. The Committee have made 32 recommendations in relation to the ethical standards framework for local government and they are reproduced in the Appendix to this Report for the Committee's consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Standards Committee note the publication of the Tenth Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life and the series of recommendations in relation to local government.