

# ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES

Report By: County Secretary and Solicitor

## Wards Affected

County-wide

## Purpose

1. To review the Fourth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees held on 5/6 September 2005 at the International Conference Centre (ICC), Birmingham.

## Background

2. The Standards Board for England have been hosting an annual conference of standards committees since 2001. These occasions have become important events in both training and developing Standards Committee members and also allowing for a series of high-level debates with government ministers and other stakeholders in developing the ethical framework for local government.
3. The Fourth Assembly was entitled "Ethical Standards – In Your Hands" and focused on developing participants' skills in dealing with investigations and local hearings.
4. The conference programme included a number of important plenary sessions (attended by over 800 delegates) led by Phil Woolas MP, Minister for Local Government, and Sir Alistair Graham, Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. The conference also held a number of workshops, question and answer sessions and partnership events looking in more detail at investigations, hearings and decision-making.
5. David Prince, the Chief Executive of the Standards Board for England (SBE) was also able to present the Annual Report 2004/05 "Taking an Objective Approach – Regulation with a Local Focus". The SBE have met a number of key objectives over the year including:
  - Clearing the backlog of 400 investigations that had built up whilst the full legislative framework was put in place.
  - Speeding up investigations – completing nearly twice as many during 2004/05 as the previous year.
  - Halving the time taken to make a decision or whether to investigate a complaint.
  - Filtering out malicious, vexatious and tit-for-tat complaints.
  - Focusing positively on cases with the potential to damage local democracy.
  - Enabling successful local investigations.
  - Encouraging local authorities to take leadership on ethics.
  - Developing the ethical governance toolkit jointly with the Audit Commission and the Improvement and Development Agency.

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

6. The Committee were able to send a significant number of delegates this year from the Committee.
- Robert Rogers
  - David Stevens
  - Councillor John Edwards (Chairman)
  - Councillor John Stone (Vice-Chairman)
  - John Hardwick

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the Committee note the report.**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Conference papers for the Fourth Annual Assembly of Standards Committee 5/6 September 2005.