

## **REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

### **Meeting held on 30 June 2006**

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#### **Membership:**

Robert Rogers (Independent Member) (Chairman); Councillor John Edwards, Councillor John Stone; Richard Gething (Town and Parish Council Representative); John Hardwick (Town and Parish Council Representative); David Stevens (Independent Member).

#### **APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATIONS RECEIVED FROM TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILLORS**

1. We have granted a dispensation to two members of Brilley Parish Council in relation to their roles as members of Brilley Village Hall Committee, and to fourteen members of Kington Town Council in relation to an employment matter.

#### **DISPENSATIONS: DRAFT GUIDANCE FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS**

2. We felt that town and parish councils were finding the rules for dispensations unduly complicated. We have therefore considered the first draft of a short guidance leaflet and application form for town and parish councillors, outlining the broad principles of dispensations and the circumstances in which they might be required. We are in the process of consulting the Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) on this guidance, and will agree the finishing touches by correspondence before our next meeting.

#### **HEARINGS: DRAFT GUIDANCE FOR PARTICIPANTS AND DRAFT INTERNAL PROCEDURE NOTE**

3. Work is continuing on the written guidance for those attending hearings so that they are aware of what to expect from the process at the earliest stage possible. We are also producing a comprehensive internal procedure note, which takes account of all of the recent hearings guidance produced by the SBE, and of our own administrative arrangements. We shall finalise these documents at our next meeting on 20 October 2006.

#### **WEST MERCIA INDEPENDENT MEMBERS' FORUM**

4. Mr David Stevens reported on the meeting of the West Mercia Independent Members' Forum, held in Oswestry on 07 June 2006. The meeting concentrated on members' varied experiences of hearings. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Alan McLaughlin, also attended the meeting, and he and Mr Stevens were able to make a significant contribution to the discussion. Other Authorities will be using some of our guidance and forms at their hearings as a result.

#### **JOINT TRAINING EVENT WITH THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE AND HALC**

5. We will be holding joint training sessions with HALC in October/November 2006 and also early in 2007. These sessions have proved invaluable in the past as a way to make town and parish councillors aware of ethics and standards issues, and to further the already excellent relations between the Committee and HALC members.

## **DETERMINATIONS BY THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND**

6. We have considered progress reports on current investigations by the Standards Board for England. We are now receiving more information on the precise nature of allegations, with particular reference to the different matters that may be raised under the general heading of "Conduct". Perhaps unsurprisingly, most complaints received by the SBE relate to the planning process, and this information will help us to focus our training and guidance in the right areas.

**ROBERT ROGERS  
CHAIRMAN  
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

- Agenda papers of the meeting held on 30 June 2006.