

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Your attendance is requested at a meeting to be held at the Jeffery Room,  
Guildhall on Tuesday, 11 April 2006 at 5:00 pm.

**M. McLean**  
**Chief Executive**

**AGENDA**

1. APOLOGIES
2. MINUTES
3. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES
4. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED
5. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIR J. Inch  
x 7335
- .... 6. STANDARDS BOARD UPDATE J. Buckler  
x 7341  
Report of Solicitor to the Council (copy herewith)
7. "GOING LOCAL" (INVESTIGATIONS AND HEARINGS)  
DVD Presentation.
8. ROLE OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE (THE MONITORING ROLE) J. Inch  
x 7335  
Report of Solicitor to the Council (copy to follow)
9. PROPOSED PROTOCOL/ PROCEDURE/ SUB- COMMITTEE FOR LOCAL DETERMINATIONS J. Inch  
x 7335  
Solicitor to the Council to report
10. ETHICAL GOVERNANCE TOOLKIT J. Buckler  
x 7341  
Solicitor to the Council to report
- .... 11. PROPOSED NEWSLETTER J. Buckler  
x 7341  
Report of Solicitor to the Council (copy draft newsletter herewith)
- .... 12. INDEPENDENT MEMBERS FORUM J Romose  
Report of Independent Member (copy herewith)
13. ANNUAL REPORT (WORK PLAN) J. Inch  
x 7335  
Solicitor to the Council to Report
- .... 14. CODE OF CONDUCT J. Buckler  
x 7341  
Report of the Solicitor to the Council (copy herewith)

15. STANDARDS BOARD CONFERENCE 2006  
Solicitor to the Council to Report

J. Inch  
x 7335

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**NORTHAMPTON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>  11 April 2006	ITEM NO:  <b>6</b>
Report of the Solicitor to the Council  Directorate: Finance, Governance & Citizens  Author/Contact Officer: Jackie Buckler – Procurement & Practice Team Manager Tel: 01604 837341 ext 7341	<b>STANDARDS BOARD UPDATE</b>
<u>Recommendation(s)</u>  1. That the Report be noted	

1. **GENERAL**

Bulletin 27 has previously been circulated at the time of writing this report. Any further updates received will be distributed and reported on verbally to the Committee.

2. **ENHANCED PROFILE OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

It is intended, following the consultation on the Code of Conduct that Standards Committees will become more involved in the ethical framework decision-making process, one of the proposals is to adopt a "local filter" approach to complaints, it is seen as the most appropriate way of addressing local issues and ensuring local ownership of standards.

3. **ROLE OF STANDARDS BOARDS**

The Standards Board will continue in a central role:

- championing and providing high standards of conduct
- developing the strategic functions of providing guidance and support to local authorities including appropriate sanctions for local determinations
- Developing resources to help with training
- Developing a training framework

- Setting standards for Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees
- Supporting authorities with ongoing self assessments
- Overseeing the "local decision making process" to ensure consistency and quality of the process; and
- Retaining an investigative role for serious cases referred by Standards Committee

#### 4. PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

It is expected that there will be significant changes in this area, such as allowing members with prejudicial interests which arise through membership of other public bodies to speak (but not vote) in certain circumstances.

#### 5. STATISTICS

The latest national statistics are detailed in Bulletin 27 and, as reported to the Committee previously, are remaining fairly constant. What may be of interest is that the number of cases referred for local investigation is now 44% of all allegations referred for investigation.

The final findings to date of the local investigations are:

No breach	42.6%
Breach	57.4%

#### 6. SUMMARY

Indeed the current theme is localization, which means increasing the profile, the responsibilities and importance of the local Standards Committee under the guidance of the National Standards Board for England.

J P Buckler  
11/04/06



# STANDARDS COMMITTEE

NORTH HAMPTON  
PARISH COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER 3

APRIL 2006

## The Standards Committee Who are they ?

- Independent Chair - Margaret Roberts
- Independent Member - Jorgen Romose
- Parish Councillor Member - David Hughes
- Substitute Parish Councillor Member - Margaret Edwards
- Cllr. Marion Allen
- Cllr. Margaret Pritchard
- Cllr. Donald Edwards
- Cllr. Jane Duncan
- Cllr. Marianne Taylor

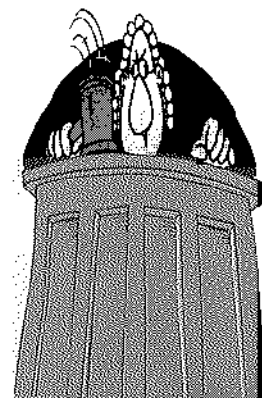


## Message From The Chair



## Proposed New Code of Conduct *"A clearer more enabling code"*

- The Standards Board of England will continue to have a central strategic role, providing standards of conduct across local government.  
They will continue to investigate matters of national significance.  
They will focus on the provision, maintenance and monitoring of a national framework, ensuring high standards locally.
- Local filtering of complaints, new legislation expected in 2008.
- Higher profile of the role of standards committees with a move to a more localised approach and locally based framework.



## REGISTER REMINDERS



Do you need to amend or update your entry on the Council's Register of Interests?

If so, contact Frazer McGown, Meeting Services Team Leader.

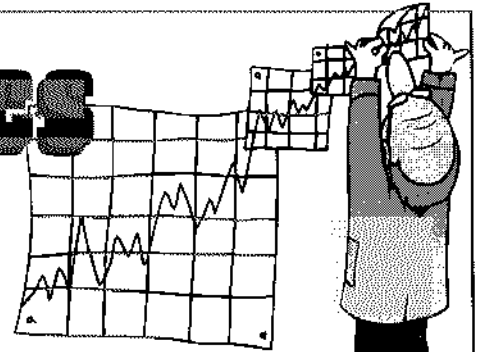


To register all gifts and hospitality received that exceed £25 in value (in connection with your official duties as a councillor)



**REMEMBER**

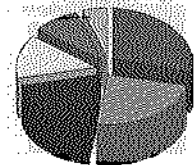
# National Statistics



## Statistics of interest:-

**Total number of allegations to date for 2005/2006**      **3239**

- 40%**    **Of the allegations are about members of Parish Councils -**
- 26%**    **Of the allegations are about members of District Councils**
- 27%**    **Of the allegations received are referred for investigation**
- 53%**    **Of the allegations referred for investigation are about members of Parish Councils; and**
- 23%**    **are about members of District Councils**



### Source of Allegations

<b>Members of the public</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>Fellow Councillors</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Council employees</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>2%</b>

### Nature of Allegations Referred for Investigation

<b>Bringing Authority into disrepute</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Prejudicial interest</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Failure to disclose personal interest</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Failure to treat others with respect</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Failure to register financial interests</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Failure to confer to secure an advantage or disadvantage</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>11%</b>

## Think About It ? ? ?

### Have you a:- Personal Interest ~~or a~~ Prejudicial Interest

**Q** Does the matter affect to a greater extent than other Council Tax payers, Ratepayers or Inhabitants... Your well being or financial position or of your relatives or friends (Declare and Stay)

**Q** Is the interest one which a member of public with knowledge of the relevant facts would regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest. (Declare and Leave)

**Report to the Standards Committee for Northampton Borough  
On the Northamptonshire Independent Members Forum,  
Which took place 27<sup>th</sup> February 2006?**

Invitation from: Dennis J S Wilson, Northamptonshire County Council

Venue: The Venton Centre, Off York Road, Northampton NN1 5QG

Purpose: To see if such a forum can support independent members and the committees.

**Participants:**

Corby – John Knibbs and Gordon Steed

Daventry – Jim Cox and Michael Smythe

East Northants – Robert Wootton and Ika Castka

Kettering – Julie Millar and Mark Bower

Northampton – Margaret Roberts and Jorgen Romose

Northamptonshire – Denis Wilson

South Northants – Gordon Kay and Ann Lewis

Bedfordshire – Eamonn Whelan

Monitoring Officer Barbara Ding. (Extraordinary participant who promised to take minutes for Denis Wilson)

Anne Rehill from the Standards Board for England (Lecturer only)

After an informal introduction around the table Anne Rehill gave a presentation about Independent Members Fora and their experience. The Standards Board are in favour of establishing Independent Members Fora around the country. It is generally seen to support the independent members in their role and also promote consistency among all the different Standard Committees. It is noted that parish representatives do not have the same support and an inclusion of parish representatives could be considered. A proposal as to how often such a forum could meet and how their terms of reference could look was listed. Independent members were seen as of increasing importance and their numbers would probably increase in the standard Committees.

We had an around the table presentation of what we felt made our committees effective. It was quite clear that there were quite some differences in how the various Standard Committees worked, how successful their training of councillors had been etc. It was also clear that there was a vast difference in experience of members and any training they had received.

Few members had had experience with hearings but some of those who did had done it very differently from how we had organised it, but not better.

In the end most of us agreed that it had been a useful meeting. There was a general agreement that we should meet again in the autumn a morning or afternoon session. We were given the task to investigate if we (Northampton Borough) could host it next time around but exclude the lunch. There was a general agreement that we did not want to form any formal organisation or be part of a formal organisation. E-mail addresses were given to Denis Wilson.



## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

11 April 2006

ITEM NO:

14

Report of the Solicitor to the Council

Directorate:  
Finance, Governance & Citizens

Author/Contact Officer:  
Jackie Buckler – Procurement & Practice  
Team Leader  
Tel: 01604 837341 ext 7341

**RE-AFFIRMATION OF  
CODE OF CONDUCT**

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Committee considers the report and endorses the recommendation made in paragraph 3.2 of this report.

### 1. **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Council's Code of Conduct (the Code) which sets out rules governing the behaviour of its members was formally adopted by the Council on 29 April 2002.
- 1.2 The Code is divided into 3 parts namely:  
  
PART 1 – General Interests (Scope and Obligations)  
PART 2 – Specific Interests (Personal Interests, Disclosure of Personal Interests, Prejudicial Interests, Overview & Scrutiny Committees, Participation in relation to disclosed interests)  
  
PART 3 – Register of Members Interests (Registration of financial and other interests including Gifts and Hospitality)
- 1.3 Following the adoption of the Code, all Members (including Parish Councillors) were bound by it and had to confirm in writing that they would observe the code and register their financial and other interests in the Council's Register with a further obligation that the register must also be updated within 28 days of becoming aware of any changes to the interests registered; this includes the registration of gifts and hospitality received.
- 1.4 Personal and Prejudicial interests are required to be declared at meetings of the Council and its Committees.
- 1.5 The written confirmation is effective for Members/Parish Councillors' term of office and will apply whenever Members/Parish Councillors are conducting business of their Council or office.



- 1.6 As you will be aware the Council is currently undergoing many changes and addressing many issues which includes ethical governance. To establish the profile of ethical governance and to also acknowledge its importance it is recommended that the Committee endorses paragraph 3 of this report as an appropriate way forward.

## 2. CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 In April of each year Members receive a set of forms to re-register their financial and other interests pursuant to Section 81(1) of the Local Government Act 2000. Included with the forms is a reminder that any changes require registering within 28 days, this action thereby confirming adherence to Part 3 of the Code.
- 2.2 Parts 1 and 2 of the Code and the registration of Gifts and Hospitality pursuant to Part 3 are covered by Members/Parish Councillors' original written undertaking to be bound by the Code of Conduct.

## 3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is important from the Committee's perspective to maintain a profiled role in promoting confidence in standards of conduct by advising on, assisting with and monitoring the operation of the Code and encouraging Members to attend all training in this respect.
- 3.2 In the interests of propriety and to re-affirm the Members' commitment in maintaining high standards of conduct, it is proposed that the Committee recommends that Members/Parish Councillors be asked to confirm their observance of the Code by signing an annual Undertaking at the Annual Council Meeting to that effect (Parish Council Clerks to be advised in writing within same time frame). Accordingly it is proposed that the recommendations of this report be actioned at the next Annual Council Meeting.



**NORTHAMPTON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**WRITTEN UNDERTAKING  
IN RESPECT OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

I ..... confirm that I will observe of the Code of Conduct which for the time being applies to me as Councillor/Co-opted Member of Northampton Borough Council

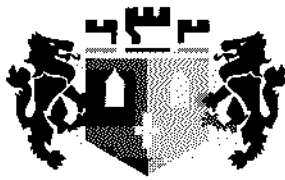
SIGNED:

DATE:

WITNESS:

OFFICE USE

DATE RECEIVED:



**NORTHAMPTON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**WRITTEN UNDERTAKING  
IN RESPECT OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

I ..... confirm that I will observe the Code of Conduct which for the time being applies to me as Councillor/Co-opted Member of ..... Parish Council

SIGNED:

DATE:

WITNESS:

**OFFICE USE**

*This form once completed should be returned to your Parish Council Clerk, who will keep a copy for reference. The Original will be forwarded to the Monitoring Officer (Solicitor to the Council), Northampton Borough Council, The Guildhall, St Giles Square, The Guildhall, Northampton, NN1 1DE.*

DATE RECEIVED:

(on behalf of the Monitoring Officer)