

Standards Committee

AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Report Title	Standards for England – “Local Standards 2.0 – the proportionality upgrade?”
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Date of Meeting:	14 th June 2010
Directorate:	Borough Solicitor & Monitoring Officer
Ward(s)	All

1. Summary

The Standards for England publication, “*Local Standards 2.0 – the proportionality upgrade? A review of the local standards framework*” (the “publication”) is attached to this report which summarises the publication’s key points.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the publication.

3. Report Background

3.1 Standards for England has conducted a review of how the local standards framework has been working since its introduction in May 2008, when local authorities’ standards committees became responsible for receiving and assessing complaints about members and co-opted members.

3.2 Standards for England states that the local standards framework is working, as it is “having a positive influence on behaviour and is generating confidence that bad behaviour will be dealt with”. However, Standards for England also acknowledges that there are various issues arising from the local standards framework which raise questions about “the proportionality of the framework, its timeliness, cost and fairness to all, at all times”. Standards for England has therefore made a number of recommendations that it considers will address these difficulties and result in an improved framework.

3.3 The key recommendations include the following:

- More streamlined local assessment – arrangements to more easily dismiss trivial and less serious complaints, saving on time, money and burdensome process.
- An enhanced role for independent chairs and vice chairs – in the assessment of complaints and the progress of investigations, with a counterbalancing extra power

for the national regulator to investigate and if necessary remove poor performing or partisan chairs.

- A new power for standards committees to be able to halt investigations if they have good reasons.
- A commitment to greater transparency for members who are the subject of complaints.
- The need to develop an approach which allows better understanding and management of costs associated with the operation of the framework.

3.4 The Committee is referred to Appendix 1 of the publication (page 28), which lists all of Standards for England's recommendations. Chapter 8 of the publication (page 15) describes the findings of the review and links these findings with the resulting recommendations.

3.5 The recommendations of Standards for England will go to the Department for Communities and Local Government for their consideration. Most of the recommendations to the Government would, if accepted, require legislative or regulatory change.

3.6 The purpose of this report is to ensure that the Committee is aware that Standards for England is proposing changes to the local standards framework.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Resources and Risk

None

4.2 Legal

None at present.

4.3 Other Implications

None

5. Background Papers

None

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