

Standards Committee

AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Report Title	THE FUTURE OF THE STANDARDS REGIME
---------------------	---

Date of Meeting:	18 October 2010
Directorate:	Borough Solicitor
Ward(s)	All

1. Summary

- 1.1 To inform the Standards Committee about the Coalition Government's proposals to abolish the Standards Board Regime.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the Coalition Government's proposals.

3. Report Background

- 3.1 The Coalition Government has announced they are to abolish the Standards Board regime as announced in the upcoming Decentralisation and Localism Bill.
- 3.2 More detail on the proposals was contained in the Communities Minister Andrew Stunell's announcement on 20 September 2010 and Communities Secretary Eric Pickles' comments of the same date (attached as Appendix 1). The Communities and Local Government Association released details of these announcements and comments in its Latest news and these are also enclosed within appendix 1.
- 3.3 In the meantime Standards for England have released a statement that they intend to continue to work and support local authorities under the current regime whilst the statutory framework remains operative.
- 3.4 However the whole Standards Board regime consisting of a centrally prescribed code of conduct, standards committees with the power to suspend councillors and an unelected central body will be axed in the upcoming Localism Bill. There has also been speculation in some quarters that Standards for England's scrutinizing role may be passed over to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 3.5 The Government will also legislate to make it clear that councillors can campaign and vote freely on their issues. Councillors who have been prevented from speaking on the very issues they had been elected on, such as planning matters, will now have the freedom to

express their views. But councillors will have to register certain personal interests in a publicly available register; this could include anything that could reasonably be regarded as likely to influence or affect their actions, conduct when on business for the authority or voting. The new legislation will make failing to register an interest, or deliberately seeking to mislead the public about an interest a criminal offence.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Resources and Risk

This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance and those using the service and where such implications are material they have been described in the body of this report.

4.2 Legal

None other than those mentioned in the body of the report. Standards Committee is the appropriate body to consider the matters set out in this report.

4.3 Other Implications

This report had also been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and those using the service and where such implication are material that they have been described in the text of the report.

5. Background Papers

Communities Minister Andrew Stunell announcement 20 September 2010, Communities Secretary Eric Pickles comments of the same date, Communities and Local Government Latest news of the same date attached Appendix 1

Report Author and Title: Nikolas Jacob, solicitor on behalf of Francis Fernandes, Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer Northampton Borough Council

Telephone and Email: 01604 837735 and njacob@northampton.gov.uk