



Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Standards Committee

Date: 21st December 2006

Subject: Standards Board for England: Town and Parish Standard 08

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Ethnic minorities

Women

Disabled people

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to notify Members of the Committee of the latest Town and Parish Standard issued by the Standards Board for England.
2. Highlights from this issue (attached as Appendix A) include:
 - the key changes the Standards Board anticipate coming into effect when the revised Members' Code of Conduct comes into force next year;
 - details of the actions the Standards Board is taking to help support Parish and Town Councils.
3. Members of the Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and the Town and Parish Standard.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to notify Members of the Committee of the latest Town and Parish Standard issued by the Standards Board for England.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The Town and Parish Standard is a newsletter for Parish and Town Councillors, containing news, features and guidance on the Code of Conduct and the work of The Standards Board for England. It is designed to support Members in performing their duties under the Code of Conduct and keep them informed of ethical issues in the local government sector.
- 2.2 The Town and Parish Standard is distributed three times a year with the Local Council Review, the publication of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). Past issues are available through the Standards Board website: <http://www.standardsboard.co.uk/Publications/TownandParishStandard/>

3.0 Main Issues

Key changes to the Code of Conduct

- 3.1 Members of the Committee are able to find out more about the proposed key changes to the Code of Conduct from Item 16 of the agenda.

Working with Parish and Town Councils

- 3.3 The Standards Board are currently working with individual parishes and other organisations (such as the NALC, the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC), and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)) to improve Parish and Town Councils.

Capacity-building bid

- 3.3.1 As previously mentioned in Standards Board communications, the Standards Board, the NALC, the SLCC and the IDeA have submitted a joint bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government for funding for three projects aimed at Parish and Town Councils. These are:
- Peer-mentoring programme** – this will match existing trained Councillor mentors with other Parish and Town Councils to share knowledge around good practice.
- Ethical Governance Toolkit** – this will provide good practice advice on how to make Parish and Town Councils work more openly and effectively, and to help Councillors in their day to day roles.
- Model compact** – this will encourage greater partnership working between county associations of local councils and standards committees in the area.

Action plans for parishes

- 3.3.2 If the Standards Board have particular concerns about a certain parish because of the amount of complaints it has received, the Standards Board will assess whether there may be other ways of solving the problem rather than simply investigating the complaints. If so, key local people such as the county secretary, the standards committee chair, Society for Local Council Clerks representative and monitoring officer will be contacted to try and develop an action plan. This may include specific training programmes, mediation services or other activities.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 4.1 The Town and Parish Standard contributes to good governance by raising awareness of the Code of Conduct and ethical issues at a Parish and Town Council level.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal or resource implications to this report.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The Town and Parish Standard is a newsletter for Parish and Town Councillors, containing news, features and guidance on the Code of Conduct and the work of The Standards Board for England.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 Members of the Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and the Town and Parish Standard.