

Standards Committee

14 February 2006



CIPFA Better Governance Forum – Ethical Standards

Report of Delegates

Background

1. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Better Governance Forum regularly hosts events for the local government community to share experience and promote best practice in a range of corporate and financial governance areas.
2. On 24 November, 2005 delegates attended such an event at York, where the particular emphasis was on ethical standards. The following paragraphs summarise the key points from the event and a copy of the relevant documentation has been placed in the Members' Resource Centre.

The Latest Legal Developments and Forthcoming Changes

3. Chris Boothman (Chief Solicitor at the Standards Board for England) exemplified some recent Member conduct cases heard by the Adjudication Panel and briefly summarised the likely regime transformation in the near future, i.e.
 - The Board to become more of a strategic regulator.
 - More local investigations and hearings.
 - A local as opposed to a national filter.
 - A revised Code of Conduct.

Ethics and Human Rights

4. Professor Conor Gearty (Barrister and Adviser to the Standards Board) presented an insight into what the Human Rights Act was all about, the interaction between the Standards legislation and Human Rights, some key issues around fairness, political speech, privacy, propriety and non - discrimination, and then finally a selection of some recent Human Rights cases.

Ethics in Governance

5. Professor Alan Lawton from Teesside University led a discussion on developing a wider ethical culture within an authority, current and potential roles for Monitoring Officers and how other countries regulated conduct in local government.

Maladministration and Ethical Standards

6. This was an opportunity to meet with and hear from Anne Seex, the new Local Government Ombudsman for the North of England, who contrasted her role with that of the Standards Board.

The Role of the Monitoring Officer

7. Graeme Creer, Solicitor to Liverpool City Council, shared his experiences as Monitoring Officer, including how and when to make a statutory report, maintaining good governance and dealing with complaints.

Conclusion

8. As ever, with these types of events, there was an opportunity to meet with and share experiences with counterpart colleagues from other authorities and overall the Forum helped to cement our understanding as well as anticipate the next steps in moving forward the ethical agenda.

Delegates

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