

Standards Committee

Item 5

21 August 2008

Standards Board for England
Annual Review 2007-08



Report of Lesley Davies, Acting Director of Corporate Services and Monitoring Officer

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To advise Members about the publication of the Annual Report of the Standards Board for England 2007 - 08 entitled *Local Delivery, National Support*.

Overview

- 2 The Review of 2007-08 outlines the changing role of the Standards Board, the new responsibilities of local authorities, and the considerable work undertaken by the Board in the past year to facilitate the introduction of the new ethical standards framework.

Local Assessment of Complaints

- 3 During the year the Board created and ran 3 pilot projects to create an understanding of how the new framework for the local assessment of complaints might work in practice:
 - 38 standards committees took part in the first pilot considering 12 real anonymised complaints
 - An on-line audit pilot helped to streamline information returns from local authorities to the Standards Board
 - A joint arrangements pilot looked at the possibilities of standards committees working together in joint structures.
- 4 The Standards Board produced a comprehensive range of guidance materials around the launch of the new local framework focusing on four key areas - local assessment and how it will operate; the role and make up of standards committees; local investigations and local determinations.

- 5 At a national level the Standards Board will define what it is that people can expect the standards framework to deliver and it will perform a local monitoring role to champion high standards and share good practice with Monitoring Officers.

The Code of Conduct

- 6 The revised Code of Conduct was implemented in May 2007 and during the year the Standards Board has promoted the Code to ensure all members were aware of the changes and what they would mean in practice via a series of publications, a DVD and a programme of roadshows across the country.

Spreading the word

- 7 The Review also references how over the year the Board has worked with a large number of organisations and individuals in a number of ways. This included the sixth Annual Assembly, party political conferences and the Local Government Association Annual Conference and Exhibition 2007. The Board also engaged in a number of partnerships, designed to develop a greater understanding of the ethical agenda.

The Year Ahead

- 8 The new framework is now firmly embedded in the culture of local authorities. The task identified for the next 12 months is to ensure that standards committees and monitoring officers are confident in their roles and that the system is operated efficiently at the local level. The Standards Board will provide guidance and information on the management of cases locally, offer a light touch when it comes to monitoring and look to highlight good practice wherever they see it.
- 9 In conclusion the Board believes the changes are right – and they are already making a positive impact. The Board's work in the year ahead will be to ensure their continued success.
- 10 A copy of the document has been placed in the Members Resource Centre for information.

Conclusion

- 11 Members are asked to note the report.

Contact: Bill McKibbin Tel: (0191) 383 3507
