

Standards Committee

18 February 2011

The Localism Bill - Standards



Report of Colette Longbottom

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Purpose of the Report

- 1 To advise Members of the Key Provisions of the Localism Bill relating to Standards.

Background

- 2 The Localism Bill was published in December.
- 3 Its principal provisions relating to Standards are:-
 - (i) The Standards Board regime will end.
 - (ii) The Secretary of State's power to specify principles which cover a Code of Conduct are removed. He also has no power to issue a Model Code of Conduct.
 - (iii) The provisions compelling Local Authorities to adopt the Code of Conduct are rescinded.
 - (iv) The Code of Conduct that was introduced under the Local Government Act will cease to have effect and the undertakings to comply with the Code of Conduct given by Members when they sign their declaration, will also cease to have effect when the Code ceases to have affect.
 - (v) The County Council will no longer have responsibility to the Standards Committee of Parish Councils.
 - (vi) Standards Committees, however, continue with their obligations to promote and maintain high standards of conduct and assist Members in observing their Code.
 - (vii) The authority will have to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and co-opted Members of Authorities and they may adopt voluntary Codes of Conduct.
 - (viii) Under regulations, the Monitoring Officer will be responsible for the provision for disclosure and registration of Members' and Co-opted Members interests. What will be required to be placed on that register will depend upon regulations which the Act authorises the Secretary of State to make.

- (ix) Failure to disclose registerable interests or participating in business whilst having such interests will be an offence. The details of the offences will become clearer when the regulations are produced.
- 4 Until the Bill undergoes further debate and subsequent guidance is issued, it is obviously difficult to plan and prepare for the implications its inception will have on this authority, however Standards will continue to be kept informed of any relevant developments.

Recommendation

- 5 The Committee is asked to note the report.