

Standards Committee

29 May 2012



The Localism Act 2011 - The Amended Standards Regime

Report of Colette Longbottom, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

Purpose of the Report

1. This report is intended to update Standards Committee on the steps being taken to introduce a new Code of Conduct with effect from the 1 July 2011.

Background

2. On 21 March 2011 the County Council considered my recommendations on the steps required to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Localism Act. I have appended to this report a copy of the recommendations submitted to the Council which were agreed in their entirety.
3. Both CLG and the Local Government Association have now produced model Codes of Conduct containing broad principles. Over recent months the Monitoring Officers of the Principal Councils in the North East have worked together to try and produce a Code which would be acceptable to their Councils and the Parish Councils in the area. The National Association of Local Councils have already indicated on behalf of Parish Councils that they would not be minded to adopt the proposed Codes produced by CLG or the LGA. I will be presenting a report on the options available to the Constitution working Group in order to formulate recommendations for full council.
4. CLG have intimated that despite the strict wording of the Localism Act, transitional arrangements were likely to be permitted which would enable current independent members of the Standards Committee to fulfil the role of independent person for a limited period under the new regime. Dorothy Winter our current Chair has agreed that she would be prepared to fulfil that role on a transitional basis.
5. In order to keep the Parish Councils in the picture with developments, I have written to all Parish Clerks and a copy of my letter is attached at Appendix 2.

Recommendations

6. Regulations governing declaration of Discloseable Personal Interests have been awaited for some time. They will form an essential part of the new Code and this part of the Code cannot be finalized until we know the exact nature of the statutory controls to be applied. The Committee is recommended to note the steps being taken to ensure compliance with the Standards provisions of the Localism Act 2011.

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