

43. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee noted that on 1 March 2006, changes had been made to legislation which affected hearings of Standards Committees. The changes related to the provisions regarding the access to meetings of local authorities and the availability of documents relating to such meetings. Principal councils could exclude the press and public from a meeting whenever it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information and the changes, which had been made, were in relation to the categories of exempt information. Members were advised that the categories of exempt information specifically relating to Standards Committee hearings were largely unaffected, although they had been renumbered. The Standards Board remained of the view that hearings should generally be held in public.

RESOLVED:

That the changes made to the categories of exempt information be noted.

44. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that the calendar for 2006/07 provided for meetings of the Committees on 18 July 2006, 17 October 2006, 27 February 2007 and 25 April 2007.

45. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**RESOLVED:**

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the item of business set out below on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that maintaining the exemption is considered to outweigh the potential public interest in disclosing the information:

Agenda Item No	Subject	Exempt Information and Paragraph Number
9	Adjudication Sub-Committees	1 and 2

46. ADJUDICATION SUB-COMMITTEES

The Committee noted that two reports of local investigating officers had not yet been received. The Deputy Monitoring Officer who was undertaking one of the investigations drew attention to the amount of time required to undertake such an investigation. He advised that he expected to be in a position to issue a report in late April/early May 2006. He also advised that the Monitoring Officer of an adjoining authority undertaking the other investigation was working to a similar timescale.

The Committee discussed the resources required to undertake investigations, the problems arising from officers being conflicted out of the process as a result of having given advice at an early stage and the likelihood of more cases being referred for local investigation by the Standards Board for England. Attention was also drawn to the cost of engaging investigators from the private sector.

Members noted that in view of the need for matters to be determined within a period of three months from the date of receipt of investigation reports it might be necessary to arrange for an additional meeting of this Committee to consider the reports.

RESOLVED:

That the annual report of this Committee include reference to the need for adequate resources to be provided in order to be able to undertake local investigations.

CHAIRMAN