

The Committee noted that the Standards Board had stated that it would continue to switch the focus of its work from the investigation of cases towards the provision and maintenance of a national framework of support to help local authorities to ensure high standards locally. Members questioned the meaning of this statement.

RESOLVED:

That the Monitoring Officer seek clarification from the Standards Board for England of its statement that it will provide and maintain a national framework of support to help local authorities ensure high standards locally.

(b) CIPFA Better Governance Forum

The Monitoring Officer reported on her attendance in April 2006 at a course on "Conduct, Behaviour and Ethical Standards". She reported that advice had been provided on the content of annual reports of Standards Committees and whilst this Committee's annual report already contained much of the recommended content some further good practice had been learnt which would be suggested for inclusion in future reports.

The Monitoring Officer advised that many authorities had been represented at the Forum and it had been clear that this Committee was more active and better focussed than most of the other Committees which had been represented. It was also clear that unlike this Committee, many others had difficulty in appointing and retaining independent members.

The Monitoring Officer also advised that consultations were taking place at a national level about the need for Monitoring Officers to be either solicitors or barristers.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer reported that the District Council at its last meeting had complimented the Committee on its work during the last year and on its annual report. The Council had not reacted to the reference in the report to the likely need for additional resources to support the ethical framework in the future.

7. ALLEGATIONS ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF DISTRICT AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILLORS - CURRENT POSITION

The Committee noted the current position on allegations made to the Standards Board for England regarding District and Parish/Town Councillors.

Members questioned whether any response had been received from the Stapleford Abbotts Parish Council in relation to the concerns which had been expressed by the Standards Committee about a lack of transparency of some of the administrative processes adopted by that Parish Council.

The Allegations Determination Manager reported that there had been no response.

RESOLVED:

That the Parish Council Clerk be requested to place the letter dated 29 June 2006 she received from the District Council's Democratic Services Manager on an agenda for a Parish Council meeting and to notify the District Council's Monitoring Officer of the Parish Council's formal response to that letter.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that the calendar for 2006/07 provided for meetings of the Committee on 17 October 2006, 27 February 2007 and 25 April 2007. Members were advised of the likelihood of additional meetings being held in order to consider reports of investigating officers.

9. 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 paragraph 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:

<u>Agenda Item No.</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Exempt Information Paragraph Number</u>
8	Appointment of Adjudication Sub-Committee	7C

10. APPOINTMENT OF ADJUDICATION SUB-COMMITTEE

The Allegations Determination Manager drew attention to the final report of John Austin, Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer of the London Borough of Enfield who had investigated on behalf of this Council's Monitoring Officer an allegation made about the conduct of a District Councillor.

The Investigating Officer's finding was that there had been a breach of the Code of Conduct in this case and it was necessary, therefore, for the Committee to appoint an Adjudication Sub-Committee of three members to consider the matter in detail. Members were advised that the pre-hearing process had commenced and that the meeting of the Sub-Committee should take place before 14 September 2006.

Members considered the make-up of a Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the three independent members of this Committee, namely Dr D Hawes, Ms M Marshall and G Welch form the Adjudication Sub-Committee to adjudicate on allegation SBE 12697.05 referred to the Council's Monitoring Officer and investigated locally;

(2) That G Welch be appointed Chairman of the Adjudication Sub-Committee; and

(3) That arrangements be made for the meeting of the Sub-Committee to be held before 7 September 2006 in view of the commitments of two members of the Sub-Committee immediately after that date.

CHAIRMAN