

Bulletin

Bulletin 12 2003



The *Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination) Regulations 2003* have enhanced the importance of Standards Committees in the ethical framework. Ethical Standards Officers have, at the time of writing, referred nine cases to Monitoring Officers for local determination by Standards Committees.

The Standards Board for England recognises the vital role that Standards Committees play in promoting the Code of Conduct and aims to give them as much help as it can. To this end, we will be publishing the first issue of a quarterly *Standards Committee Newsletter* this autumn. It will be aimed at Standards Committee members, and will offer more guidance and some examples of good practice.

Investigations

The first Standards Committee hearing under the new regulations took place on 1 September 2003 and resulted in the former member being censured. There will be more hearings coming up shortly.

In the early days of the regulations, Ethical Standards Officers were contacting Monitoring Officers before making referrals to discuss whether the authorities were ready to deal with local determination.

However, Ethical Standards Officers are now giving advance notice to Monitoring Officers of potential referrals when they send out draft case reports for comments.

Research

The research organisation MORI will soon be sending questionnaires to Monitoring Officers and members as part of The Standards Board for England's research project *Satisfaction with support and guidance*. The research, which will assess satisfaction with The Standards Board for England's support and guidance, will also be sent to parish and town clerks.

The project should help to ensure that future advice and guidance provided by The Standards Board for

England meets the needs of its various stakeholders. The success of the project will depend on your participation, so we hope that you will find the time to complete and return the questionnaire.

Further information on this research project can be obtained from Gary Hickey at The Standards Board for England on 020 7378 5087 or at gary.hickey@standardsboard.co.uk

Fringe events at party conferences

The Standards Board for England is hosting a series of fringe events at the forthcoming party conferences entitled '*Should people trust politicians?*' Leading journalists and MPs will debate ethical standards and confidence in the democratic process. All delegates are welcome to attend and refreshments will be provided.

Speakers and times:

Liberal Democrat conference

Lembit Öpik, MP

Kevin Maguire, Chief Reporter, *The Guardian*

Matthew Parris, Columnist, *The Times*

Sunday 21 September 6.30-7.30pm

Forest Suite, Quality Hotel, West Street, Brighton

Labour Party conference

Peter Hain, MP
Kevin Maguire, Chief Reporter, *The Guardian*
Matthew Parris, Columnist, *The Times*

Sunday 28 September 6.00-7.00pm
Dorchester One, Highcliff Marriott Hotel, St Michael's
Road, Bournemouth

Conservative Party conference

Eric Pickles, MP
Kevin Maguire, Chief Reporter, *The Guardian*
Peter Osborne, Political Editor, *The Spectator*

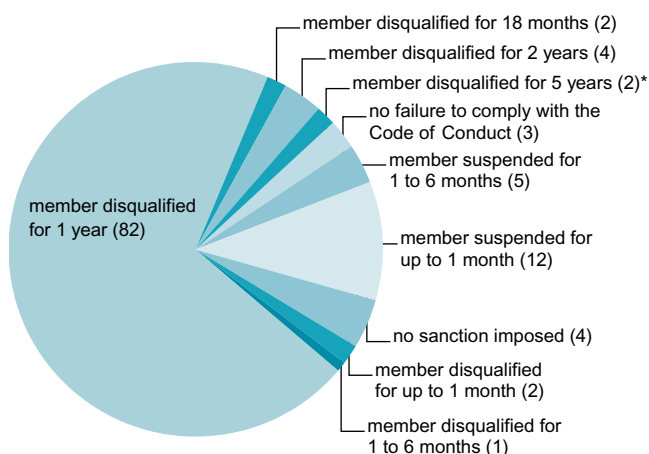
Tuesday 7 October 10.00-11.00am
Arena 2, Winter Gardens, Church Street, Blackpool

Statistics

The Adjudication Panel for England

161 cases had been referred to the Adjudication Panel for England by 31 July 2003. Case tribunals heard 117 of these cases between 1 January 2003 and 31 July 2003.

Case tribunal decisions between 1 January 2003 and 31 July 2003 for cases referred



*please note that these two cases were against one member

Details of the Adjudication Panel for England's recent decisions can be found at www.adjudicationpanel.co.uk/decisions/recent_decisions.htm

The decisions are also summarised on The Standards Board for England's website at www.standardsboard.co.uk/cases/index.php

FAQ

Can independent members of Standards Committees receive allowances?

We have revised our guidance on independent members' allowances in the light of *The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003*, which came into force on 1 May 2003.

Under the regulations, an authority must introduce an annual scheme for the payment of a basic allowance to its members. The scheme may also provide for the payment of other allowances including a co-optees' allowance and travelling and subsistence expenses.

A co-optees' allowance relates to a person who is not a member of the authority but is a member of a committee or sub-committee, for example an independent member of a Standards Committee.

Each authority must consider the recommendations of its independent remuneration panel as to whether it should provide for the payment of a co-optees' allowance and travelling and subsistence expenses.

Authorities must make a scheme in accordance with the regulations on or before 31 December 2003. Once the authority has made the scheme, the provisions under the *Local Government Act 1972* relating to members' allowances will no longer apply to that authority.

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The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Local Government Association are looking to issue joint guidance on the regulations in the near future.

The regulations are available at
www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031021.htm

Further information can be obtained from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister at www.odpm.gov.uk