

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Standards Committee

11th February 2008

1. CHECKLIST FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE RUN UP TO APRIL 2008 –STANDARDS BOARD

Report of the Monitoring Officer.

RECOMMENDED

1.1 THAT members note the level of compliance (against the checklist published by the Standards Board) in readiness of the implementation of the changes being brought in by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 in relation to the ethical standards framework in local government.

1.2 THAT members to consider what aspects of the preparations could be further strengthened.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 This report is submitted to inform members of the checklist published by the Standards Board for England to help local authorities assess their preparedness for the locally managed ethical standards framework which is likely to be implemented from Spring 2008 and to enable the Standards Committee to consider what remains to be done.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 received Royal Assent on 30th October 2007 and changes the Local Government Act 2000 in relation to the ethical standards framework for local government. Implementation of the legislative changes will follow changes being made to secondary legislation and the Government is currently consulting on these. In anticipation of the regulations and guidance that will define and provide the necessary detail for the changes local authorities are

encouraged to prepare for their additional duties.

- 3.2 The Standards Board for England has published a checklist for local authorities to help them assess their preparedness for the locally managed ethical standards framework which is likely to be implemented from Spring 2008. The checklist is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
- 3.3 The Standards Committee has received various reports.
- 3.4 The size and structure of the Standards Committee needs to be reviewed in the light of the changes.
- 3.5 Members may well consider further training to be appropriate as the changes become further defined.
- 3.6 Local assessment criteria will need to be developed following guidance from the Standards Board. Members will have to consider if any local circumstances and priorities are adequately addressed in the national model or whether amendments need to be incorporated.
- 3.7 The Monitoring Officer will have additional responsibilities under the new framework e.g. preparing a summary of the allegations for the Standards Committee and highlighting the potential Code breaches.
- 3.8 The public needs to be informed of the new arrangements and a leaflet for the local assessment process developed.
- 3.9 Clearly following the enactment of secondary legislation and publication of guidance by the Standards Board the authority will have to fairly quickly make further changes to its processes and procedures in relation to ethical standards.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 has amended the Local Government Act 2000. Most decision-making on the conduct regime for local authority members is devolved to local authorities, with a revised, regulatory role provided for the Standards Board. The Standards Board will be able to issue guidance and monitor local authorities and in cases of non-compliance suspend the role of local standards committees.
- 5.2 The checklist is not part of any formal monitoring but is useful in helping the Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer to assess the state of readiness for the legislative changes which are likely to be in force in Spring 2008.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Preparations for the revised ethical standards framework have not required identification of additional resources although implementation of the locally based regime will result in additional work for the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer. The resources available may need to be reviewed in due course.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

“Checklist for Local Authorities in the run up to April 2008” – Standards Board for England.

N SHARMA
MONITORING OFFICER