

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Standards Committee**

**6<sup>th</sup> September 2010**

1. **COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE - ANNUAL REVIEW AND REPORT 2009-10**

Report of the Monitoring Officer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Standards Committee note the contents of the report and consider any issues for the Authority.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to bring to members' attention the Annual Report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life, and to enable members to consider any implications for the Authority.
- 2.2 It should be noted that the Committee supports the need for a local standards framework. It is not yet known how the new government's proposed legislation will affect Standards Committees, the Members Code of Conduct, and ethical governance more generally.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established in 1994. As an independent advisory body to the government, the Committee's duty is to monitor, report and make recommendations on all issues relating to standards in public life. They look at both national and local issues regarding the standards of conduct of all holders of public office and the funding of political parties, ensuring the highest standards of propriety.
- 3.2 The Annual Report sets out the Committee's work over the previous year and their agenda going forward. The 2009-10 report discusses the following;

- Twelfth Report: Review of MP's Expenses and Allowances
- Review of Local and London government
- Parliament;
  - Peers' Expenses
  - Lobbying
  - Reform of the House of Commons
- Devolved legislatures
- Local standards issues;
  - System for determining councillor allowances
  - Local government standards framework
  - Governance of Local partnerships and grant funded bodies
- Ministers and civil servants
- Freedom of information
- Electoral administration
- The funding of political parties

An extract from the report can be found attached as Appendix 1.

- 3.3 The Committee believes that it is necessary to have a clear code of conduct, an independent mechanism for dealing with the most serious breaches and some overarching mechanism to ensure effectiveness and consistency.
- 3.4 This is in contrast to the Communities and Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles previous stance of 2005 that 'the Standards Board should be abolished, and we shall do that in our first month in office'. Further details of Eric Pickles statement can be found attached as Appendix 2.
- 3.5 The government has said that it will abolish the "Standards Board regime" via the Decentralisation and Localism Bill. We do not yet know what this means for the Code of Conduct and the Standards Committees particularly in the light of the report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

#### 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 Act 2000 is the enabling legislation for the ethical framework. The new coalition government is likely to

change this legislation with resultant changes to secondary legislation also.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report although changes to the standards regime may eventually impact upon resources.

**N SHARMA  
MONITORING OFFICER**