

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THE FUTURE OF STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND AND THE STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

As you will not doubt be aware, the Government's 'Programme for Government' published on 20th May 2010 contained the commitment to "abolish the Standards Board regime". Standards for England have advised that Primary legislation is required to abolish Standards for England, and it is expected the provisions will be included in the planned Decentralisation and Localism Bill, which is due to be presented in late 2010, with Royal Assent anticipated between July and October 2011. This is likely to lead to final closure of the organisation sometime between 31st December 2011 and 31st March 2012.

Until such time as relevant legislation is passed, the local standards framework still exists therefore Standards Committees and Monitoring Officers have an obligation to keep the system operating.

Standards for England remain committed to ensuring that there is a proper framework of local accountability in which the public can have confidence. As more details emerge, Members will be updated of developments and future arrangements.

GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

Guidance from the Standards for England in relation to Gifts and Hospitality has recently been circulated to All Members of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, All Members of Darwen Town Council and Parish Councils.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

The Standards Committee Annual Report 2009/10 was recently submitted to the Standards Committee. The report has been circulated to all Members of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, All Members of Darwen Town Council and Parish Councils.

RECRUITMENT

Two vacancies are still currently available on the Standards Committee, one independent and one parish Member.

The Standards Committee recently agreed to postpone recruitment to the two vacancies until further clarification has been received in relation to the future of Standards for England.

ETHICAL GOVERNANCE WEBSITE

Work is still taking place on the website, with amendments being made to the page by the Communications team. When the major work has been completed, and the draft page approved by the Vice Chair of the Committee and myself, the website will be launched. The web page and the work of the Standards Committee will also be highlighted in publications such as Team Talk and The Shuttle.

TRAINING

Since May 2010 the following training has been provided to Members:

- Induction for new Members of the Council
- Planning and Highways Committee – Mandatory training for all who wish to sit on the Planning and Highways Committee
- Licensing – Mandatory training for Members of the Licensing Committee
- Council representatives to outside bodies – Guidance has been issued to all Members