



Standards Committee – 20 April 2005

Fourth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees

Summary of report

To request that the Committee nominate two independent members to attend the fourth annual Assembly of Standards Committees on 5 and 6 September 2005 at the ICC, Birmingham. In addition to the two independent members, a member from each of the three political groups on the Council will attend the Conference.

Recommendations

- (1) That the content of the report be noted;
- (2) That the Committee be requested to determine which two independent members will attend the fourth annual Assembly of Standards Committees in accordance with the agreed system of rotation and that provision for substitution be made if the member(s) nominated cannot attend.

Report detail

The fourth annual Assembly of Standards Committees will be held on Monday 5 and Tuesday 6 September 2005 at the International Convention Centre, Birmingham. This year's Conference will be considering the work of Standards Committees and others within local government who play a significant role alongside them.

This year's annual assembly focuses on local responsibility for investigations, hearings and ultimately public confidence in local democracy. The conference sessions include:

Investigations

- Local authorities share their experience
- How are local investigation regulations bedding down?
- Key components of a good investigation
- Practical workshops – practice and improve investigative and decision-making skills

Hearings

- Best practice – share successes, problems and solutions
- Practical workshops – explain skills in applying the Code of Conduct, reaching findings and proportionate sanctions

Public confidence

- Public perception of ethical standards – initiating change
- Ethical “health checks” using the new ethical toolkit
- Standards Committees – going beyond the Code of Conduct
- Communicating good news and tackling a lack of public confidence
- When standards slip – early warning signs and prevention

Debating a mission impossible

Key influencers of public opinion debate whether the public will ever trust local government. Speakers will include Tim Minogue, Editor of Private Eyes Rotten Boroughs column.

Additional events will be run throughout the conference, hosted by:

- Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors
- Audit Commission
- Improvement and Development Agency
- National Association of Local Councils
- The Adjudication Panel for England
- Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers

The Committee at its meeting on 29 April 2004 agreed a rotational system of attending being introduced so that over a three year period, each independent member has the opportunity to attend the assembly. Attendance at the assembly provides an ideal opportunity for members and officers to exchange information, details of best practice on the latest legislative and procedural developments relating to the work of Standards Committee.

In determining which two members attended the conference each year, the Committee is recommended to have regard to the following factors:

- Those independent members who have not attended the conference before;
- When the independent member was appointed, more recent appointments should be considered for attendance sooner rather than later;
- The availability of independent members to attend, if for any reason the member nominated cannot attend, provision for substitution be made.

The table below shows details of each independent member against the criteria set out above.

Independent member	Previous attendance	Retirement
Mr. L. Bates	Yes	2006
Mr. M. Hodgson	No	2005
Ms. K. McLeod	Yes	2005
Mr. R. Meller	Yes	2006
Mrs. S. Parsons	No	2007
Mr. R. Taylor	No	2007

Following the conference, a detailed report will be submitted to the next available meeting of the Committee so that information and experiences gained can be shared with all members.

Background papers

All published

Signed:

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