

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: The Monitoring Officer

REPORT NUMBER: **K115**

TO: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: 15 October 2010

STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND ‘BULLETIN 48’

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To receive the latest Bulletin from Standards For England (‘SFE’).

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Standards For England ‘Bulletin 48’ be received.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The decision by SFE to restrict the type and number of complaints that it will investigate could increase costs to councils if investigations into serious misconduct need to be out-sourced.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Significant Business Risk No. 5 (Governance).

Risk Description	Likelihood	Seriousness or Impact	Mitigation Measures
A complaint referred to SFE is not accepted causing resource or cost implications and possible conflict of interest for Committee members.	High	Significant	Utilise shared working arrangements with our Suffolk partners.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT

5.1 Not directly relevant to this report.

6. KEY INFORMATION

6.1 ‘Bulletin 48’ reiterates the abolition of SFE. It suggests that final closure is likely to occur between 31 December 2011 and 31 March 2012. It may therefore be anticipated that the abolition of the standards regime and the role of standards committee will be at the same time.

- 6.2 As a consequence of the pending changes, SFE will be scaling back its operations. In particular, whilst the criteria for its acceptance of complaints will remain, it will have regard to the resources available to it and the importance of the case in arriving at a decision about whether to accept the complaint. This could therefore have an impact on councils, which may find themselves having to conduct investigations that would otherwise have been undertaken by SFE. It may also be necessary to seek assistance from other standards committees' members rather than making a referral to SFE where members have a conflict of interest.
- 6.3 The Annual Return will no longer be required to be submitted to SFE. Quarterly returns had already been abolished.
- 6.4 In view of the likely demise of standards committees, SFE suggest that councils can extend the term of office of an independent member without compliance with the statutory provision for advertising, provided the extension is done before the term of office expires. In Babergh's case, the next independent member term of office to expire is that of the Chairman, Mr J G Watson, on 30 September 2011.

7. APPENDICES

- 7.1 [Standards For England 'Bulletin 48'](#)

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:

- 8.1 None

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