

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

16th SEPTEMBER 2010

The Future of Standards for England

OPEN	
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APPENDICES	None

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To apprise Members of the Government's planned Decentralisation and Localism Bill and the current impact on Standards for England's activities.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to DECIDE:

- 2.1 **To note the contents of the report; and feedback to Standards for England any views about how future arrangements could most effectively work.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 1st June a letter was received from Dr Robert Chilton, Chair of Standards for England. The letter advised the Council that the Government had announced in the Queen's Speech that the proposed Decentralisation and Localism Bill would include proposals to abolish the Standards for England regime.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Government has published details of the contributions required for the £6.2 billion cross government savings for 2010/2011. This included the £0.45 billion (26%) savings which are to be made from the Local Government Departmental Expenditure Limit. As part of the reductions in the Local Government Departmental Expenditure Limit it was announced that Standards for England would deliver efficiency savings of £1.45 million during 2010/2011 which equates to 18% of Standards for England's total budget.
- 4.2 During parliamentary questions on 8th June 2010, Andrew Stunell, Local Government Minister confirmed that the Localism Bill would include legislation which would scrap Standards for England which was a commitment made in The Coalition Agreement.
- 4.3 Mr Stunell informed MP's that the Standards for England Board cost £7.8 million and only dealt with approximately 1,000 complaints per year (which equated to £7,800 per complaint).
- 4.4 Sir Robert Chilton's letter to Councils dated 1st June 2010 made clear that there are currently no details of the scope or implications of the proposal to abolish Standards for

England. However it was made clear that the statutory framework governing standards that is currently in place will remain operative.

- 4.5 On 14th June 2010 a press release was issued by Standards for England that announced that the Standards for England Annual Assembly on 18 and 19 October 2010 had been cancelled.
- 4.6 A further letter was received by Councils on 18th June 2010 from Standards for England which stated that quarterly monitoring returns would cease and that the Board was commencing a process to review activities and to update their Business Plan.
- 4.7 Whilst future arrangements are not clear it is important that the local community is aware that the statutory framework for standards remains operative.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The statutory framework governing standards remains operative until such time as any new relevant legislation is passed.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This report was screened for impact on equalities. As a result of this screening it has been decided that a full equality impact assessment is not required.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 It is necessary to ensure that until alternative arrangements are in place that the statutory framework for standards is adhered to.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Whilst the details of the scope or implications of the Government's proposal to scrap Standards for England are not clear, it is important for the Ethics and Standards Committee to feedback their views about how they envisage future arrangements could most effectively work as this will help to shape any future arrangements.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 Chairman/Vice-Chairman of Ethics and Standards Committee
- 10.2 Legal Services

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Letter from Dr Robert Chilton, Chair, Standards for England (1st June 2010).
- 11.2 Letter from Glenys Stacey, Chief Executive, Standards for England (11th June 2010).