



Welcome

I am pleased to introduce my first *Town and Parish Standard* since succeeding David Prince as Chief Executive of the Standards Board for England. I share David's commitment to parishes and will continue to champion the work of town and parish councillors, who I believe play a key role in the democratic process.

I spoke at the annual conference of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) earlier this year in Eastbourne. It was a good opportunity to meet some of you and hear first-hand some of the concerns you have about the new framework.

In this edition of the *Town and Parish Standard*, our lead article focuses on the progress we have made with our capacity-building bid.

We also look at local assessment, which is now in place. The Standards Board has produced comprehensive guidance on the new standards framework which is now available on our website, www.standardsboard.gov.uk. We report here on some of the cases that have come our way so far.

Finally, I am pleased to introduce the new Chair of the Standards Board, **Dr Robert Chilton OBE** and our new Board members. **Elizabeth Abderrahim** is the independent Chair of Gloucester City Council's standards committee, and **Michael Kendall** is former President of the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors. In addition, existing Board member **Professor Judy Simons** has been appointed as our new Deputy Chair. A brief biography of Dr Chilton is presented in this edition.



Glenys Stacey
Chief Executive

Update on capacity-building bid

We have been working with our parish partners on getting our capacity-building bid up and running. The capacity-building bid is funded by Communities and Local Government and aims to develop good governance and leadership within parish and town councils via two programmes. Both programmes are now underway.

One programme is a compact, which is an agreement between county associations, standards committees and monitoring officers to work together to raise standards in town and parish councils. NALC has held initial meetings with each of the areas piloting the compact. Each participating County Association of Local Councils (CALC) is now in the process of compiling the final list of those parishes who will take part. NALC anticipates that the list will be finalised by September.

The other programme is a peer mentoring programme. Peer mentors have been selected for this and a final shortlist of parishes was complete by the end of August, as planned.

In the meantime, the Standards Board has already started work with its partners in developing the evaluation for each of the programmes. We expect that the evaluation will examine both the success of each of the programmes and how lessons can be learned to inform our work with parishes in the future.



New Chair of the Standards Board appointed

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CLG) has appointed Dr Robert Chilton OBE as the new Chair of the Standards Board. He took over from Sir Anthony Holland on 1 July 2008 for a three-year term.

Dr Chilton's association with local government goes back to 1965 when he began his career in regional planning. From the mid-1980s he has held positions as Chief Executive of Gillingham Borough Council, Director of Local Government Studies at the Audit Commission, Head of Transition and then interim Chief Executive of the Greater London Authority, and interim Commissioner for Transport at Transport for London.

In announcing Dr Chilton's appointment on 13 May 2008, Minister for Local Government John Healey expressed his confidence in Dr Chilton's "strategic vision" and "deep understanding and experience of local government".

Local system – key issues

A number of you at the NALC conference in May asked how the Standards Board could ensure that complaints were handled fairly and robustly now that the complaints system is local.

The Standards Board's new role is to provide the national and independent oversight necessary for there to be confidence in the locally based system. As part of our oversight role we will monitor councils and other authorities to see how they are dealing with complaints about the conduct of their members. We will also investigate the most serious cases where the local standards committee believes it is not best placed to deal with the matter and we agree to accept it.

You can find out more about local assessment by reading our *Local assessment of complaints* guidance, available from our website.

LATEST NEWS

Following the introduction of local assessment, we are now receiving cases referred to the Standards Board by local standards committees. The most common reason for acceptance has been the profile of the member, in complaints that have either been about the leader of the council or the leader of the opposition group of the council.

We are also completing investigations into matters that were referred to us before the system went local in May. In July, the Adjudication Panel disqualified two members of a parish council for a year. The married couple had been aggressive and intimidating on many occasions, resulting in resignations of a member of staff and three councillors. The conduct was at the most serious end of the spectrum.

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