

**Submission of the Conservative Group in response to a Letter from the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Standards Committee concerning the future of the Local Standards Regime**

The Conservative Group considered the future of Standards at a meeting on Saturday 10 September. The Group as a whole very much appreciated the opportunity to consider this and I would be grateful if you could convey their thanks to the current Chairman and Vice Chairman of Standards, Nigel Briers and David Sayers.

There was no appetite to retain Standards Committee in its current format but it was felt that the Audit and Governance Committee provided the ideal structure for any issues in that it could oversee the formation of a “Standards Sub Group” albeit on an ad-hoc basis only.

In particular the good work of the Independent Members of the current Standards Committee was noted and Members were keen to see their continued involvement particularly as legislation moves towards independent representation on the Audit and Governance Committee.

General concern was expressed about the opportunity the current Standards system provides for repetitive vexatious complaints, which are invariably dismissed. This resulted in the recommendation to create the opportunity for political groups to consider the issue in the first instance.

In summary:

- Retain a revised Voluntary Code of Conduct.
- The opportunity for informal inquiry/resolution within a political group be created. The circumstances of an issue would steer the representation of the political sub-group. If a political group prefers not to conduct an initial inquiry, the complaint/issue goes directly to the ad-hoc Audit Sub-Committee.
- Should further investigation be required there is the opportunity of referral to an ad-hoc Standards Sub-Committee of the Audit and Governance Committee; there would be no formal Standards Committee.
- If an issue looks to be criminal it could be referred to the Police.
- Point of contact for the public : The Monitoring Officer