

COMMITTEE: STANDARDS

DATE: 8 DECEMBER 2003

SUBJECT: BEDFORDSHIRE STANDARDS COMMITTEES INDEPENDENT MEMBERS GROUP

REPORT BY: MR. J. JONES, VICE-CHAIR, STANDARDS COMMITTEE

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IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMMUNITY SAFETY	<input type="checkbox"/>
EQUALITIES	<input type="checkbox"/>	ENVIRONMENT	<input type="checkbox"/>
FINANCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/>
STAFFING	<input type="checkbox"/>	OTHER	

WARDS AFFECTED: NONE

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the establishment of the Bedfordshire Standards Committees Independent Members Group.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That the Standards Committee note the report.

REPORT

3. The Independent Members of Standards Committees have a special role to play in relation to the business of their Standards Committees and in relation to promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct amongst members. Their role complements but is distinct from that of Elected Members of Standards Committees. The role of Independent Members varies from authority to authority. In some authorities Independent Members make up a majority of membership of the authority's Standards Committee whereas in others, such as Luton, they do not. In some authorities the Standards Committee is chaired by an Independent Member. The minimum number of Independent Members of a Standards Committee is set by law at at least 25%. No maximum number of Independent Members is specified by law but a Standards Committee cannot consist entirely of Independent Members as the law requires that there should be at least 1 Elected Member of an authority on its Standards Committee.
4. Independent Members do not always readily have access to the same support systems and networking facilities that Elected Members have (this is intended as

no criticism) and can feel somewhat isolated and remote from developments both at national and local level. I, therefore, took the view that it would be a good idea if the Independent Members of Standards Committees locally in Bedfordshire were to meet and form a group for the purpose of sharing views, practices within their respective authorities and generally networking with one another. The first meeting of the Group took place on 22 September 2003 here in Luton and the notes of that meeting are attached as Appendix A to this report for the information of the Committee.

5. Clearly the Bedfordshire Standards Committee Independent Members Group needs to be independent from the local authorities concerned and from their Standards Committees but it is clearly appropriate that this authority's Standards Committee should be aware both of the existence and of the work of the Group, particularly as I am both the Chair of the Group and the Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee.
6. I propose to update the Standards Committee from time to time on the development and work of the Group.

APPENDICES

7. Appendix A: Notes of first meeting of Bedfordshire Standards Committee Independent Members Group: 22 September 2003.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

There are no background papers to this report.

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