

Annual Assembly

From Sir Anthony Holland, Chair of the Standards Board

“Welcome to the Fifth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees, the largest gathering of members and officers concerned with the local government Code of Conduct and raising ethical standards.

The conference comes at a time of change, with the revised Code and local arrangements for receiving complaints on the horizon. And for many of you, local investigations and hearings are still in the process of being fully embedded within your authority’s governance framework.

So as ever, in the current climate, there seem to be more unknowns facing standards committees and monitoring officers than certainties, plenty of challenges and no room for complacency. And that’s what this conference is all about: Where do we need to be? Where are we now? And how do we get there?

This year’s programme, therefore, is of practical relevance in helping you and your authority to bridge the gap between where you are now – in being able to deliver effectively on the revised standards framework – and where you need to be, while still providing plenty of opportunity for some valuable networking and sharing of experiences and solutions with local practitioners.

I wish you a successful and productive conference. It will provide you with many of the tools you need to carry you forward.”

Who Should Attend?

The Annual Assembly is a crucial event for anyone who works with the Code of Conduct and towards the effective delivery of the standards required by the ethical framework.

In the past, we’ve welcomed more than 800 delegates from across the local government community including:

- monitoring officers
- standards committee members
- chief executives of councils
- leaders of councils
- independent members
- county associations secretaries
- representatives from other local government organisations

If you haven’t attended one of our conferences before, or are new to the Code, this year’s conference features a special session dedicated to your needs.

For those solicitors and barristers attending this year’s conference, there is the added bonus of earning credits towards your continuing professional development (CPD), as the conference is now certified to count towards both the Law Society’s and the General Council of the Bar’s CPD schemes.

Last year’s conference sold out quickly – so book now to be sure of your place.

Programme

Monday 16 October: at a glance

08.30 – 10.15 Registration

09.15 – 10.00 Getting up to speed: An informal introductory welcome. Attendance optional.

AN EFFECTIVE ETHICAL ENVIRONMENT: WHERE ARE WE GOING?

- 10.15 – 10.25 Welcome
10.25 – 10.40 Setting the standard
10.40 – 10.55 Bridging the gap: towards strategic regulation
10.55 – 11.25 What will an effective ethical environment look like?
11.25 – 11.45 Question time
11.45 – 12.00 Comfort break
12.00 – 13.00 SESSION 1 Implications of the revised Code of Conduct and the future ethical environment. All delegates attend a pre-allocated workshop.
13.00 – 14.15 Lunch

WHERE ARE YOU NOW? LOCATING THE GAP

- 14.15 – 15.15 Standards committees: a national snapshot
15.15 – 15.45 Comfort break
15.45 – 16.45 SESSION 2 How do you measure up? All delegates attend a pre-allocated workshop.
16.45 – 17.00 Comfort break

TOOLS TO MAKE THE TRANSITION

- 17.00 – 18.15 SESSION 3 Bridging the gap: knowledge, techniques and skills
Delegates can choose between:
- Case review – lessons learnt so far
 - A robust filter
 - (standards committee focused session)
 - Conducting an effective investigation
 - Holding an effective hearing
 - Investigations – work through
 - Hearings – work through
 - The revised Code – declaring interests
 - Investigations – in-house or out-house?
 - General open house Q & A
- 18.15 Close of day one
18.30 – 19.30 Fringe events (optional)
19.30 – 20.00 Drinks reception
20.00 – late Conference dinner

Tuesday 17 October: at a glance

- 08.00 – 09.00 Refreshments

TOOLS TO MAKE THE TRANSITION (continued)

- 09.00 – 10.15 SESSION 4 Bridging the gap: knowledge, techniques and skills
Delegates can choose between:
- Case review – lessons learnt so far
 - A robust filter
 - (monitoring officer focused session)
 - Conducting an effective investigation
 - Holding an effective hearing
 - Investigations – work through
 - Hearings – work through
 - The revised Code – declaring interests
 - Investigations – in-house or out-house?
 - General open house Q & A
- 10.15 – 10.45 Comfort break
10.45 – 11.45 When politics becomes personal: is local level governance the panacea?
11.45 – 12.00 Comfort break

- 12.00 – 13.15 SESSION 5 Bridging the gap: awareness, development, wider debate
Delegates can choose between:
- Corporate governance – integrating the ethical agenda
 - Freedom of expression – drawing the line
 - An inclusive approach to towns and parishes
 - Towns and parishes – when things go wrong
 - Training the trainer
 - Working proactively – the role of standards committees
 - Standards committees – raising your profile
 - Issues of independence
 - Monitoring officer open house Q & A
- 13.15 – 14.30 Lunch
- 14.30 – 15.45 SESSION 6 Bridging the gap: awareness, development, wider debate
Delegates can choose between:
- Corporate governance – integrating the ethical agenda
 - Freedom of expression – drawing the line
 - An inclusive approach to towns and parishes
 - Towns and parishes – when things go wrong
 - Training the trainer
 - Working proactively – the role of standards committees
 - Standards committees – raising your profile
 - Issues of independence
 - Standards committee open house Q & A
- 15.45 – 16.00 Comfort break
- 16.00 – 16.20 Time to reflect
- 16.20 – 16.30 Moving forward
- 16.30 Close

Fringe events

Fringe events are run independently of the main conference programme, by a range of bodies from the local government family. These sessions are optional, but cover topics of key interest to delegates.

Fringe events will take place at 6.30pm on Monday 16 October, following the close of main conference sessions and before the evening drinks reception begins. Please click on the relevant link for more information on each event.

Achieving excellence in local filtering: monitoring officers' perspective

Hosted by the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACSeS)

Perspectives from a monitoring officer in favour of local filtering and a monitoring officer against local filtering. The session will be interactive and discuss the practical and legal implications of the new ethical governance arrangements.

Independent members gaining a voice

Hosted by the Association of Independent members of Standards Committees in England (AIMSce)

AIMSce is being established as a professional body to provide peer group support, champion the role of independent members and represent their interests. The government is proposing that chairs of standards committees are independent members. The need for collective representation and a powerful voice is therefore evident. This fringe event is intended for independent members. Please give support.

The ethical governance toolkit – how does your authority measure up?

Hosted by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)

The ethical governance toolkit helps determine:

- how councils are meeting the ethical agenda
- where it can make improvements

This session will address:

- what the toolkit is
- what are the benefits?
- how does it work?
- materials available on the website
- deciding what tools to use
- costs
- contacts
- future developments
- questions

The future of local community governance and standards

Hosted by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

A discussion around the ethical framework of different models of community governance, chaired by John Findlay, Chief Executive, NALC.

Speakers: Dr Alan Lawton, Reader in Public Policy and Management,
School of Public Policy, Birmingham University
Tony Smith, Policy Development Team, Birmingham City Council

Ethical frameworks and the culture of organisations

Hosted by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE)

Further details on this fringe event will be added shortly, please check the Standards Board for England website for more information.