

A robust filter

Quentin Baker, Monitoring Officer, Cheltenham Borough Council

Steve Kingston, Ethical Standards Officer,
The Standards Board for England

Lucy Morris, Acting Head of Referrals,
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Richard Stephens, Chair of Standards Committee,
Tewkesbury Borough Council

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Background

- Current remit of the Standards Board to filter complaints
- Graham Committee recommendations – driven by concerns about proportionality **and culture**
- *“Despite incidence of corruption and misbehaviour, the vast majority of councillors and officers observe high standards of conduct”*

Source: Tenth Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, 2005

The Standards Board's position

- Local decisions at the local level will assist in improving local ownership of the ethical framework
- It is not **whether** the local filter will exist, but **how** it might work
- We recognise the difficulties, but we are committed to helping you

Guidance from the Standards Board

- Getting the balance right – consistency not blanket uniformity
- Establishing and maintaining a national framework
- Three key areas:
 - regulation
 - guidance
 - matters for local choice
- Building trust in the system

Different models

- The government's intention is that it will be a standards committee decision, not an officer decision
- Sub-committees:
 - referrals
 - appeal
 - investigation
- Joint committees

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“There are always flowers for those who want to see them.”

Source: Henri Matisse

Some issues identified with standards committees

- Difficulty in recruiting co-opted independent members
- Disillusionment amongst existing co-opted independent members
- Disparity of workloads between committees
- Lack of consistency in local decision-making
- Public perception that committees lack independence

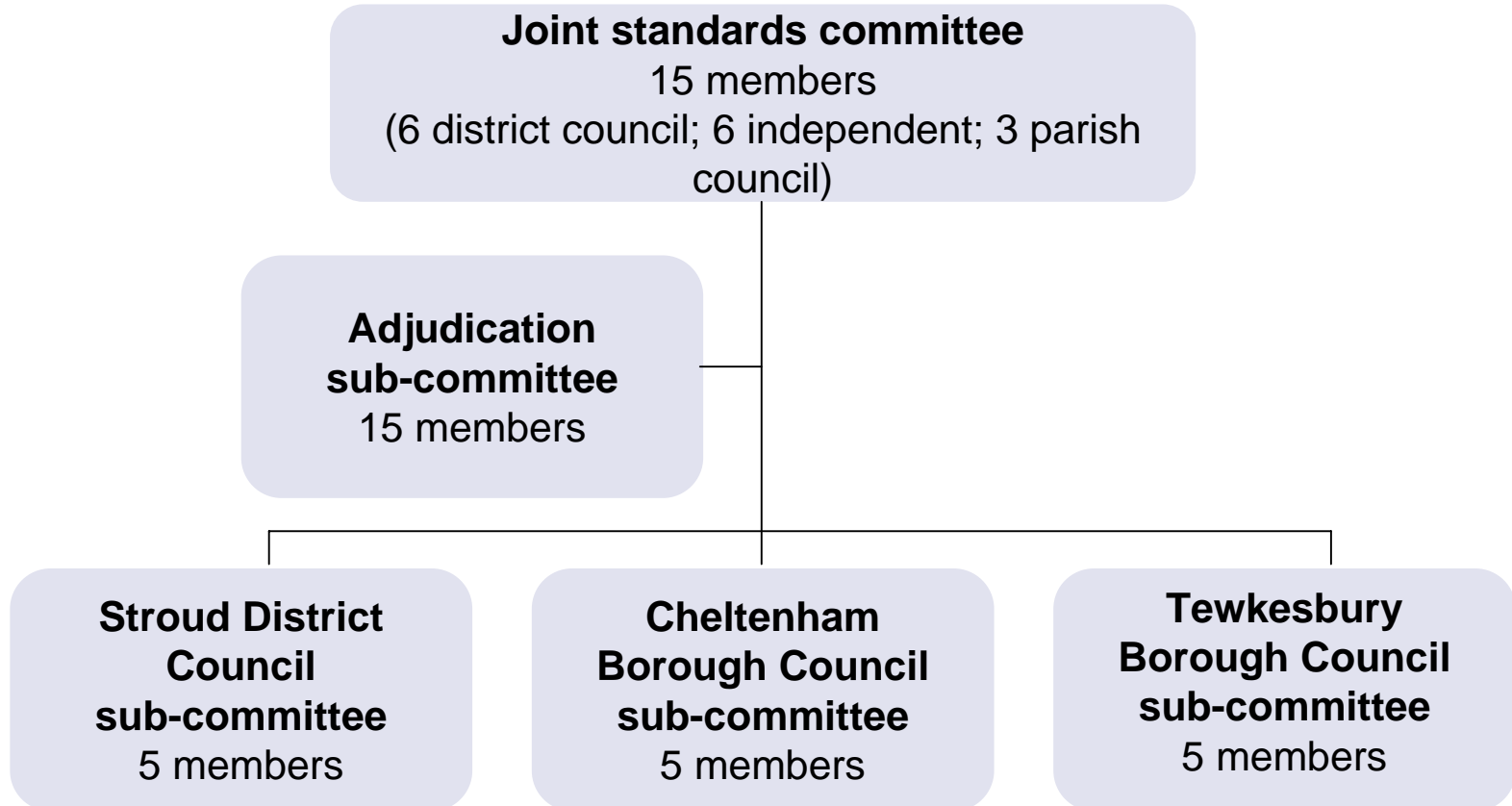
“You can also give your standards committees other functions. We believe that standards committees should be proactive by introducing change rather than reacting to events. Ultimately standards committees should aim to create and maintain ethical organisations.”

Source: Guidance on Standards Committees, The Standards Board for England, May 2002

“The reason for having an independent representative is to help increase public confidence and provide a clear signal that the committee is fair.”

Source: Guidance on Standards Committees, The Standards Board for England, May 2002

Joint standards committee: Cheltenham/Stroud/Tewkesbury



“I don’t understand why people are frightened of new ideas. I’m frightened of the old ones.”

Source: John Cage

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