

## Appendix A

The failure of the parliamentary internal regulating body has resulted in the contempt in which the public now hold most MPs. To avoid local government representatives being tarred with the same brush as our MPs, it would be prudent to reverse the 2008 change in regulations and to ensure that any investigation regarding complaints against councillors' standards be carried out by an independent body.

Joe Holroyd  
Councillor, Guilden Morden PC

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I feel that it was an entirely reasonable change that complaints now come to local Standards Committees and that they are, in nearly all cases, brought to a conclusion by those Committees.

I have several times sat as a member of the South Cambs Local Assessment Panel. My concern is the frivolous nature of many of the complaints considered. These waste the time of Panel members, but also cause expense to the District Council in officers' time, paperwork and expenses for members attending.

It is difficult to suggest an acceptable way of reducing the number of such frivolous complaints, since it must remain open for anyone to make realistic complaints, even if they eventually prove unfounded as breaches of the Code.

I can suggest only, with considerable doubt whether it would be acceptable, that a complainant should be required to deposit a fee that would be repayable if the Local Assessment Panel agrees that the complaint deserves investigation. An appeal to the Review Panel against a decision of the Local Assessment Panel could still allow repayment of the deposit.

Michael Farrar  
Councillor, Stapleford PC and Parish Council Member, SCDC Standards Committee

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Members of our Parish Council feel that the workings of the Standards Board are too secretive, and that those involved in a complaint are not given enough information on the basis of the complaint, or sufficient opportunity to comment on it.

Regards  
Roger T. Pinner  
Chairman Eltisley Parish Council

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How can local councils' panels be objective and impartial when handling local issues/complaints etc?

Local communities are close-knit and often linked through schools, friends, neighbours, workplace etc...so it will be very difficult to find impartial members to join these SB committees?

Even a local District council, County Council and Parish Council have members who are "connected" or "related" in one way or another because they are family members, governors of schools of their children, same church governing bodies,

workplace etc etc.. local relationships will be affected because the whole community will know who is doing what...

So only "outsiders" from other Counties or national Board will be more able to give impartial consideration of facts and complaints etc.

Completely independent members are hard to find locally...

Thank you,  
Cambourne resident

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My concerns re the current system are:

1. The delay in revealing the nature of the complaint to the subject of it until after the assessment committee has sat. I think the system would be fairer if the complainant were asked to indicate on the complaint form if he had any objection to the complaint being immediately revealed to the subject of it: only if he expressed valid concerns should it be withheld.
2. There is nothing in the system that allows the subject to "plead guilty". The subject of the complaint should be asked at an early stage if he agrees he has acted in breach of the code. If he does, it will only be necessary to consider the appropriate sanction, not to hold an investigation..
3. The inability of the assessment committee to take further action if the subject does not co-operate with training or conciliation.

Kathy English  
Independent Member, SCDC Standards Committee

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