



Dear Chief Executive,

## Local Government Standards

The Localism Bill published on 13th December formalises the government's proposals for the abolition of significant elements of the current local government standards regime. Among the proposals are the abolition of Standards for England, the national Code of Conduct for elected members being dispensed with and councils no longer being required to have a Standards Committee.

My many discussions on this issue in recent months have served to highlight that local government is generally supportive of the abolition of the current regime, seeing it as over-bureaucratic, burdensome and too prescriptive. When the LGA Leadership Board met in October and considered the emerging proposals, it agreed that the sector should not seek to establish a replacement framework within which councillors should operate. It did, however, emphasise the importance of maintaining high ethical standards and accountability within the sector. Standards of conduct and behaviour within local government are generally very high, with serious failures being in a tiny minority, and compare favourably with most, if not all, other sectors.

The Leadership Board agreed that the Local Government Group should continue actively to support authorities who are experiencing difficulties with their corporate governance and we will ensure we do so. The Board also agreed to communicate to all councils the legal and other provisions already in place or emerging which the government feels can be used for dealing with serious failures of conduct and behaviour within local government. In line with this, please find **attached** a paper produced jointly by the Local Government Group and the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACSeS) entitled 'Maintaining High Ethical Standards in Local Government' and which covers the following:

- The position of the Nolan Principles
- Registering interests
- Fiduciary duty of councillors
- Criminal and civil law including discrimination and electoral offences
- Local Government Ombudsman
- Audit Commission powers
- The common law position of bias, predisposition and predetermination

I am confident that local government will successfully adapt to the forthcoming changes to the standards regime, benefit from the reduced bureaucracy and prescription and continue to demonstrate the highest of ethical standards – with the latter being integral to promoting citizens' trust in local councils and the democratic process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Ransford', written in a cursive style.

John Ransford  
Chief Executive  
Local Government Association

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