

2 July 2007

Ms Claire Felton  
Monitoring Officer  
Bromsgrove District Council  
The Council House  
Burcot Lane  
Bromsgrove  
B60 1AA

Dear Claire

I enclose for your information a copy of a letter sent by Mr John Blakeley, the Wychavon Standards Committee Chairman, to the Chairs of other Council Standards Committees in Worcestershire.

Yours sincerely



**IAN MARSHALL**  
Monitoring Officer



Walnut House  
Hoden lane  
Cleeve Prior  
Evesham  
Worcestershire  
WR11 8LH

28 June, 2007

The Chair of the Standards Committee  
Council

Worcestershire

Dear Colleague,

This letter comes out of the blue, but its purpose is to ask whether there might be any interest on the part of yourself and of the Standards Committee you chair in the concept of bringing together members of Standards Committees in Worcestershire, and perhaps also Monitoring Officers, for the purposes of discussion of issues facing the committees.

At this point in time, with a new Code of Conduct for Council members just introduced (opening up in its train fresh aspects likely to need interpretation), with the introduction of local filtering of complaints in the offing, and with the role of the Standards Board for England in a state of flux, the Standards regime is undergoing something of a sea change: which makes it seem, if only to me, that it may be a good time to wonder whether there may be benefit in Standards Committee members, irrespective of whether they are elected Principal Authority Councillors, Parish/Town Councillors, or independent, coming together on a county-wide and occasional basis to exchange experiences, thoughts and concerns on the implementation and development of the regime.

A while ago I noticed from the Standards Board's "Bulletin" publication, issue 31, that a similar systematic bringing together of Standards Committee members has in fact been organised, in Suffolk, and it is this which, in the context of the sea change mentioned above, has prompted me, after waiting until the May elections were well out of the way, to write this letter.

I do so at my own initiative, albeit with the knowledge and approval of the other members of my Council's Standards Committee: but neither they nor I have any ambition beyond the mere flying of a kite, recognising that it may indeed fall straight back to ground.

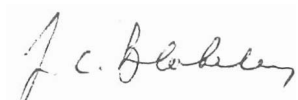
If however responses to this letter did indicate that there was a sufficiently widespread interest in pursuing the concept raised in it, I would be able at least to offer to arrange for the Wychavon Civic Centre in Pershore to be available as the venue for an initial, exploratory get-together, which I would suggest would most usefully at that stage be of Standards Committee Chairs (and, if it seemed feasible and sensible to respondents, of their Monitoring Officers as well).

As to the issues which might warrant such interest, I suppose that at present they would include (in varying degrees, given the differing impact of the Standards regime on the individual Councils in Worcestershire) the interpretation and efficacy of the new Code; the practicalities involved in the introduction of local filtering;

the complexities of the ongoing obligation on committees to conduct investigations and hearings; inter-relationships within committees and between committees and their Council members/officers and relevant external bodies; and perhaps also training matters.

I shall be most grateful for any comments you may care to make on this letter: and I should add that as well as being sent to the Chairs of the Standards Committees of the County, City, Borough and District Councils in Worcestershire, a copy is also being sent to the Monitoring Officer of Wychavon District Council and through him, for information, to his opposite numbers at those Councils.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'J. C. Blakeley', written in black ink on a light-colored background.

John C Blakeley  
(Independent) Chairman, Standards Committee  
Wychavon District Council

Copy: Mr I G Marshall, Monitoring Officer, Wychavon District Council