

Extract from the
Department for Communities and Local Government
Strong and prosperous communities
The Local Government White Paper

Localise and simplify the conduct regime

- 3.46** All democratic and public governance relies on high standards of probity. When conduct and behaviour are corrupt or improper it erodes confidence in the democratic system. The UK has a strong reputation for high standards in public life and it is important for the future well-being of local government that this is maintained.
- 3.47** The Graham Committee on Standards in Public Life reported in 2005 that the vast majority of councillors observe high standards of conduct. It also concluded that such standards would be more likely to be guaranteed if decision making on conduct issues was devolved to the greatest extent possible to the local level.
- 3.48** Strong and accountable local leadership requires the highest standards of conduct. In December 2005, we consulted on proposals to promote these high standards in local government and to improve the conduct regime, including whether there was support for a more local system for investigating allegations of misconduct. Following this consultation, which showed broad support for the proposals, we will legislate to deliver:
- a more locally-based regime, with local standards committees making initial assessments of misconduct allegations and most investigations and decisions made at local level;
 - a revised strategic regulatory role for the Standards Board to provide supervision, support and guidance for local authorities and ensure consistent standards.
- 3.49** We will also put in place a clearer, simpler and more proportionate code of conduct for local authority members and a new code for employees. Changes to the members' code will include amending the rules on personal and prejudicial interests to remove the current barriers to councillors speaking up for their constituents or for the public bodies on which they have been appointed to serve. So, for example, in future members of a planning or licensing committee will have more opportunities to represent their constituents on planning or licensing issues that affect their wards. Members will be able to speak and vote on such issues unless their interests in the matter are greater than those of most other people in the ward.