

Title: **Local Determination Hearings**

Reporting Officer: **George Curran – Solicitor**

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**Issue**

At the meeting of the Standards Committee on 7 June 2006, Members asked for a report regarding the cost implications of local standards hearings in the event that further, and increased numbers of, complaints are referred to this Council from the Standards Board for England.

It is not possible to conjecture on the number of such matters that may be referred to the Council, as this is dependent on the perceived behaviour of Councillors. It relates to perceived behaviour rather than actual as it is the perceptions of persons, which results in them making complaints. Aspects of actuality of behaviour are only likely to be identified during any investigation process, which occurs after referral to the Council. At that point in time the resources of the Council will have been committed to the matter.

For the hearing recently concluded the various costs have been assessed as follows. As, at the time of the investigation and hearings, it was not known that Members would make this request there has, necessarily, been a degree of retrospective assessment. However, it is believed that the final figures give a good assessment of the costs.

Investigation and Hearing: Monitoring and Deputy Monitoring Officer	£8700
Members Support Service	£1000
Legal Support	£2100
Publication of hearing conclusion	£80
Venue (if charged)	£850
Refreshments	£100
Total cost	£12830

These costs do not take into account any additional officer resources, which may be required, if support was given to the 'Subject Councillors' as suggested at the previous meeting.

It is also to be appreciated that these costs do not include the costs of stationery or postage; nor do they include any cost related to the distraction of officers from other work. In the case of a single hearing this can be more readily absorbed but if there were a significant number of cases to be dealt with this could severely prejudice the ability to deal with other work of whatever priority. This is a point of importance as the conduct of investigations and hearings should be given a relatively high priority due to the potential consequences for the individuals concerned.

### **Recommendation**

To note the report.