

Section 32 (1) (a) - SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

The overall role of the Standards Commission is to encourage high ethical standards in public life through the promotion of an ethical standards framework and the enforcement of the Councillors' Code of Conduct and the Codes of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies. The Standards Commission adjudicates on cases referred to it by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland where he considers that, at the conclusion of an investigation into complaints made to his office, a contravention of a Code of Conduct may have occurred.

In addition to the Standards Commission's adjudicatory role, the Standards Commission issued guidance to aid understanding and interpretation of the requirements of the Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Body Boards. It also assisted Local Authorities in their work to promote the ethical standards framework through the provision of education material and leading local training events.

The combination of the Standards Commission's adjudicatory and educational roles helps to ensure high ethical standards in public life are achieved, which in turn ensures public confidence in local government, public bodies and the democratic process itself is maintained.

Section 32 (1) (b) - EFFICIENCY, ECONOMY and EFFECTIVENESS

During 2014/15 the Standards Commission conducted a review of its Hearing Rules to ensure that cases continue to be dealt with fairly, effectively and as timeously as possible. The Standards Commission also introduced additional guidance about the Relevancy of Evidence, which supports the Hearing process and which could effectively shorten the length of time taken to consider matters presented during the Hearing. The effectiveness of the Hearing procedures are scrutinised and evaluated throughout the year and where appropriate the processes are simplified to ensure clarity. This will ultimately make the whole procedure more effective whilst ensuring everyone is dealt with fairly and timeously. Making the Hearing process more efficient should reduce overall costs and time commitments for all parties. Furthermore during 2014/15 the Standards Commission implemented a policy to hold Hearings within local authority premises.

The Standards Commission produced and issued revised guidance on the Model Code of Conduct, held workshops, provided training and produced educational material such as Professional Briefings to assist Members with interpreting the Code and therefore reduce the likelihood of potential breaches.

The office of the Standards Commission is located within the Scottish Parliament building which provides an opportunity to implement Shared Service Agreements. During 2014/15 the facilities provided to the Commission on a nil costs basis include Accommodation, Finance Office and Payment Services, Internal Audit, Mailroom, access to photocopying facilities and the use of meeting rooms. Furthermore the Standards Commission is currently working towards implementing a Service Level Agreement for the provision of IT services which will be completed during 2015/16. The provision of these facilities and services has reduced the Standards Commission's overall running costs and overall budget expenditure by 5%.