

Appendix C

<p>District Councillor (full Member of Standards Committee)</p>	<p><i>"I think that it is important to keep Standards as a distinct committee to ensure that there is a high quality of work done by a membership that cares about what they are doing. Mixing standards in with the work of FAR (as an example) would risk fewer members wanting to be involved in Standards because there are different levels of interest for getting involved with financial audit and risk vs Standards issues."</i></p>
<p>District Councillor (full Member of Standards Committee)</p>	<p><i>"I believe that this move would be welcome, as standards could easily be folded into FAR and save some time on another meeting."</i></p>
<p>District Councillor (full Member of Standards Committee)</p>	<p><i>"I think it makes sense to discontinue the Standards committee in its current form and am happy with your proposal."</i></p>
<p>District Councillor (full Member of Standards Committee)</p>	<p><i>"On balance I would broadly be in favour of this change.</i></p> <p><i>Currently standards meetings are very short and involve a lot of Cllrs. This change would save time and money and most importantly improve efficiency.</i></p> <p><i>If this were to happen, it is my understanding that there would be no need to increase the number of Cllrs who currently sit on FAR?"</i></p>
<p>Parish Councillor Standards Committee co-optee</p>	<p><i>"As a Parish Council representative my input is that I believe the PC reps offer a 2 way window into upholding Standards in our councils. Having representation from Parishes both helps Parish Councillors appreciate that there is a Standards process fully recognised by the Council and Parish Councillors are in turn providing transparency to a wider audience . Given national issues currently being discussed and also noting issues recently in the news closed to home in Dacorum Council I believe it important to have as much transparency as possible and the presence of Parish Councillors is a beneficial part of the process."</i></p>
<p>Independent Person</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>I have reminded myself of the present Standards Committee's terms of reference and note the first: ...to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co-Opted Members of the authority. The words are a direct lift from s27 of the Localism Act. They are an unambiguous obligation.</i> 2. <i>As I see it, North Herts Council has delegated that major responsibility to the Standards Committee whose role then is to ensure, on behalf of the Council, that its members do, indeed, behave properly; that they observe the Nolan principles, as reflected in the adopted code of conduct.</i> 3. <i>I suggest, therefore, that the working group's review should not focus solely on rationalising the numbers of committees and their meeting frequency, relevant though such matters are in the interests of administrative efficiency. It ought to</i>

	<p><i>take into account, also, the significance and importance to the Council of each committee.</i></p> <p>4. <i>In that context and uniquely, in my view, the Standards Committee has a purpose that sits above the others. It is the body that sets the tone for all members' activities as elected representatives; and it oversees how a tone, thus set, is applied.</i></p> <p>5. <i>I suggest that this major responsibly would fit uneasily as an adjunct to another committee - Finance, Audit and Risk - in which location it could give the impression of being subordinate to that body. In my view its status is the opposite: its role as tone-setter eclipses other Council functions.</i></p> <p>6. <i>In my view, also, to merge it with Finance, Audit and Risk could give the electorate the understandable impression that oversight of members' adherence to their conduct obligations had become less important. Such a position would do little to promote the electorate's confidence in their local government. More than that: it would be undesirable, I suggest.</i></p> <p>7. <i>Therefore, rather than giving the impression of diluting the importance of standards by implementing the contemplated merger, the working group would do well to consider inviting the Standards Committee to review its present terms of reference to ensure that they enable it fully to fulfil its role. In particular, '...7.5.8 to assist Councillors and Co-Opted Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;' would bear detailed consideration of how it might be given practical expression.</i></p> <p>8. <i>A final thought: an understandable driver for the review might be to save officers' time and Council resources. From the explanation in the invitation to comment of how a revised standards arrangements might work, I'm not convinced that it would make a substantial difference to justify the notion on that ground alone.</i></p> <p>9. <i>In short, for the reasons set out above, I suggest that an amalgamation is inappropriate and that the existing Standards Committee should be retained with an enhanced brief.</i></p> <p>10. <i>I would be happy to discuss this topic with the working party if its members felt that that would be helpful."</i></p>
<p>(then) Reserve Independent Person</p>	<p><i>"The promotion and maintenance of high standards ought to be central features of good governance. Having a "standalone" Standards Committee helps to keep standards matters in the minds of elected members and of the wider body public. Councillors are busy people with full agendas so it is perhaps understandable if from time to time ethical considerations, particularly in nuanced circumstances, become somewhat</i></p>

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	<p><i>blurred. Having a specific committee on which councillors themselves sit provides a regular reminder of the importance of standards. Similarly having executive members involved adds to the importance attached to standards matters. It would be a pity if any new organisational configuration meant that our standards regime lost its particular identity with the risk of becoming an afterthought.</i></p> <p><i>I have found our "inner sanctum" made up of Councillors, Mo, dep Mos, IP and RIPs particularly useful. From our annual IP meetings with Paul Hoey it is apparent that such an arrangement is not widespread. It has proved an efficient and effective way of keeping our standards regime in good health. I would hope that this would not be lost in any re-organisation."</i></p>
<p>(then) Reserve Independent Person</p>	<p><i>"I do want standards to be given as central a place in the structures as possible, so I have a slight hesitation about merging the committee that keeps an eye on these with another that has a different agenda. If however those of you who know a lot more than me are content that standards will retain a central place in the new structures, then that's fine by me."</i></p>