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Press Release on ODPM Select Committee's report on the Standards Board for England

The Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors ('ACSeS') welcomes the report from ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee on The Standards Board for England and the Ethical Framework for Local Government.

ACSeS gave evidence to the Committee in December 2004 and we are pleased that the Select Committee has recognised the important role played by the Standards Board in local government.

Gifty Edila, President of ACSeS said 'I am delighted to read in the report the Select Committee's conclusion that the majority of local government members and officials unflinchingly adhere to the high standards that the Government expect and the public deserve.

Both Members and officers go into local government because of a genuine belief in public service and not for reasons of self gratification. Such belief provides the discipline needed to occupy the office of a Councillor or officer.'

Whilst ACSeS welcomes the broad thrust of the report it is disappointing to note the missed opportunity to recommend to Government a local filter process. There is no reason why complaints against Members need to start from the Standards Board for England. In fact when compared with the Ombudsman system, (which the public have confidence in), complaints start locally. Complainants often refer matters to the Ombudsman when their internal complaints are not successfully resolved. Furthermore, the proposed retention of the whistle-blowing obligation in the Code of Conduct is also not favoured by ACSeS.

ACSeS will work with ODPM and the Standards Board for England to make necessary improvements to the ethical framework.

**Gifty Edila
President
Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors**