

## SW Independent members of Standards Committees Group Meeting

Poole                      29 September 2006

Concern was expressed at the lack of notice and information re this meeting. The low rate of attendance was thought to be a direct consequence of this. It was noted that no one had received the minutes of the previous meeting. Discussion ensued as to how best to improve general communication amongst members. It was decided to build a database of individual contact details, preferably email addresses.

The guest speaker was Ms Oluchi Onwerre, Principal legal Advisor of the Standards Board. She took us through her experience of attending Hearings, following the Legal Framework. She stressed the importance of time limits at the different stages. These could only be breached if the subject member, chair or crucial witness was ill or on jury service.

She advised that papers relating to the Hearing should not be circulated to the public or press until it has been decided whether or not the case would be held in private. (This is likely to be only in cases such as those involving a minor or child abuse – the presumption is that it will be in public).

Any sanctions will be determined by the Standards Committee, not the Standards Board (SB) – the SB representative would only state the facts to be considered. I asked the SB to consider whether the minutes and any apology should be made available on the web.

We were reminded that the Committee must give the reasons for their decisions.

The afternoon session discussed a paper which was circulated about proposals to join a new association AIMSce – Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England. Whether or not people joined – and there was a worry that the cost might not be met by all Authorities – it was the unanimous view that, irrespective of this new association, members in the SW would still wish to meet regularly and that the current area should be maintained.