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Our Ref: ER/BN/002872/12

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Kris Hopkins".

23 FEB 2012

LOCALISM ACT: NEW STANDARDS ARRANGEMENTS

Thank you for your letter of 25 January to the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, on behalf of your constituent, [REDACTED] of [REDACTED], who is a member of Bradford Metropolitan District Council's Standards Committee. [REDACTED] is concerned about the exclusion, under the Localism Act, of certain people from being appointed as the independent person under the new standards arrangements. She is also concerned about the composition of standards committees under the new arrangements and the fact that co-opted members will no longer have a vote.

The exclusion of existing members of standards committees from being appointed as an Independent Person was put in place to provide a clear break with the old Standards Board regime, and ensures that no person who is an independent member or chair of a council's statutory standards committee can be appointed as the Localism Act's independent person while they continue to be a member of that committee.

The Department received a number of representations from councils about this matter, and after careful consideration, Ministers are minded that transitional provision should be made allowing a council to appoint a person as an independent person who, although not a member or chairman of a standards committee at the time of appointment (or thereafter), has held such a post within the last five years. This transitional provision would apply for the first year of the new arrangements, and any person appointed under the transitional provisions would be able to continue to hold office after the transitional period, for whatever term the council saw fit.

However, the Government has no plans to allow a relative or close friend of members, co-opted members or of an officer of a parish council within the council's area to be appointed as an independent person. Similarly, it has no plans to give co-opted members of non-statutory standards committees a vote, or to exclude them from the political balance rules.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bob Neill".

An official stamp or signature block for Bob Neill MP, featuring a stylized signature above the text "BOB NEILL MP".

BOB NEILL MP