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Dear George, 02 MAR 2011

LOCALISM BILL - FUTURE OF STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

Thank you for your letter of 8 February to the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP enclosing correspondence from Mr Chris Ashcroft, Head of Democratic Services at Winchester City Council, about the Localism Bill and the future of the standards framework. I am responding because this subject falls within my area of responsibilities.

We are legislating to remove top-down, centralised control and inspection and giving local authorities, including parish councils, greater freedom to direct their own affairs. It would be incompatible with the principles of localism that underpin the policies in the Localism Bill to legislate for a regime of monitoring and control for parish councils or indeed for any local authority.

Local authorities will be under a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct but how to achieve this is something they will determine for themselves.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Grant Shapps".

GRANT SHAPPS MP