

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Date: Wednesday, 4 April 2001
Time: 9:30 am
Venue: Committee Room 4, National Assembly Building
Title: Members Interests - Freemasonry

Purpose

1. The Presiding Officer referred representations he has received from Mr James R Bevan, P.J.G.D. Provincial Grand Secretary, Province of South Wales and Eastern Division Freemasons, to the Committee for consideration. This paper sets out the background.

Background

2. Mr Bevan has suggested that the Assembly's requirement of its Members to declare membership of the Freemasons may breach Articles 8 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights and therefore contravene the Human Rights Act 1998 which came into force in October 2000. The Presiding Officer has been asked what steps the Assembly is taking to ensure compliance with the existing legislation. The Presiding Officer has asked the Committee for advice.

3. The Secretariat, on behalf of the Committee, has asked the Assembly's legal Adviser, Mr David Lambert to consider the issues raised by Mr Bevan. Mr Lambert's paper STD 02-01(7) looks at the history of the Assembly's present requirements, consideration given by the Home Affairs Committee and the Home Office to the issue of membership of the Freemasons and the requirements of the European Convention on Human rights and the Human rights Act 1998.

Issues

4. As part of its considerations the Committee will wish to consider the:-

- relevance of the current provisions concerning the Registration and Declaration of membership of the Freemasons,
- need and options for changing the current provision, and
- possibility and consequences of legal challenge

Secretariat