

STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 27TH JUNE 2006

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE-REVIEW

Report of the: Monitoring Officer

Status: For consideration and recommendation

This report supports the Key Aim of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct in local government.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Loney

Head of Service Head of Legal and Committee Services – Mrs. Christine Nuttall

Recommendation: The Committee is requested to consider an increase of at least one independent member on the Standards Committee and for the vice chair to be an independent member.

Background

- 1 The Standards Committee is required, by legislation, to have at least 25% of its membership who are not elected members, in addition to a representative of the parish councils. The Committee currently has 6 elected members, three independent members and two parish council members. A meeting of the Committee may not take place if no independent member is present.

Introduction

- 2 The Standards Board for England recommends an increase in independent members on Standards Committees. In addition future Comprehensive Performance Assessment proposals on ethical standards issues will place those local authorities with higher levels of independent members on their standards committees in a stronger position, particularly if the committee can demonstrate a proactive role in ensuring standards are firmly embedded within the Council.
- 3 By increasing the number of independent members the Standards Committee could be strengthened in undertaking its important responsibilities relating to setting and maintaining the council's ethical standards and determining complaints referred to the committee by the Standards Board for England. .

Proposal

- 4 Members are asked to give their views on the merits or not of increasing the independent element of this Committee and also whether the vice chair should be an independent member and to recommend to the Council accordingly.

Financial Implications

- 5 Presently Independent Members of the Standards Committee can claim travelling expenses although often such expenditure is waved by such Members.

Legal Implications

- 6 The present composition of the Standards Committee complies with the requirement that at least 25% of its members must be none elected members as required by Regulation 3(1)(a) of the Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) Regulations 2001. Increasing the number of independent members on the Standards Committee would be in keeping with the advice given by the Standards Board for England.

Conclusion

- 7 The Committee is advised to recommend the increase of at least one independent member on the Standards Committee and for the vice chair to be an independent member.

Sources of Information: None

Contact Officer(s): Christine Nuttall – ext. 7245

Corporate Resources Director
Dr Pav Ramewal

RISK ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

Increasing the number of independent members on the Standards Committee will aid the Committee's role in enhancing the ethical framework and determining complaints referred to the Committee by the Standards Board for England.