

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Report No. 11

Date of Meeting	24th April 2007
Title of Report	Standards Committee – Independent Members
Link to Corporate Priorities	Good governance arrangements underpin delivery of the Council's Corporate Priorities and the promotion and regulation of high standards of ethical conduct are an essential element in working effectively with and on behalf of the community at large.
Public Report	YES

Summary of Report

The Report sets out the recommendations of the Standards Committee on the appointment and terms of office of Independent Members of the Standards Committee.

Recommendations

- 1) That the term of office of each of the current Independent Members of the Standards Committee be extended for a period of 12 months.
- 2) That an additional Independent Member be appointed to the Standards Committee to serve for a three year term expiring in May 2010.

Other than those implications agreed with the relevant Officers and referred to below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
YES	NONE	NONE	NONE	YES

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting held on the 22nd January 2007, the Standards Committee considered the Membership of the Committee.
- 1.2 This Report sets out its recommendations.

2. Options and Options Appraisal

- 2.1 Option 1: To approve the Recommendations as detailed above.
- 2.2 Option 2: Not to approve the Recommendations and to appoint two new Independent Members.
- 2.3 Option 3: To approve the Recommendations in part.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 There are presently two Independent Members of the Standards Committee, Mr J Carine and Mr R Philpott. Both have been members of the Standards Committee since its inception in March 2002.
- 3.2 On 25th April 2006, the Council extended the term of office of each of the Independent Members by one year. Mr R Philpott's term of office expires in May 2007 and that of Mr J Carine in May 2008.
- 3.3 The terms of office were extended in anticipation of changes to the Code of Conduct and to the way in which alleged breaches of the Code were to be investigated. The Council accepted that the experience gained by the present Independent Members would be invaluable in steering the Committee through this period of change.
- 3.4 Whilst the Government has consulted on the proposed changes, the legislation to give effect to the changes has yet to be enacted.
- 3.5 The rationale for extending the terms of office of the present Independent Members remains as valid as ever. It is, therefore, recommended that their terms of office be extended for a further 12 months.

4. Additional Independent Membership

- 4.1 The present composition of the Standards Committee is
 - 4 District Councillors
 - 2 Independent Members
 - Town/Parish Members
- 4.2 The Committee must have an Independent Member present to be quorate.
- 4.3 There is a trend nationally to increase the Independent representation on Standards Committees. The intention is that Independent Members are able to provide a non-political perspective on matters before the Committee and assure both the Council and the public of the Committee's impartiality.

The Committee would almost certainly benefit from an increase in Independent representation. This proposal would have the double benefit of introducing fresh blood onto the Committee whilst retaining existing experience. It would also minimise the chances of meetings being inquorate.

5. Financial Implications.

5.1 The new vacancy for an Independent Member will need to be advertised in the local press at a cost of approximately £1,000. This can be met within the existing legal team budget.

6. Equality and Diversity Implications

6.1 All members of the community are eligible to be considered for the appointment of an Independent Member to the Standards Committee.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 Both the present Independent Members have built up a good understanding of the work of the Committee. As things currently stand, their experience would be lost by May 2008 and new inexperienced Members would have to be appointed.

Appendices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards Committee Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2007. Minute Ref ST28. • Report to Council – Standards Committee Independent Members – 25th April 2006 • Standards Committee Report - Standards Committee Membership 22nd January 2007

Previous Decisions Connected with this Report

Report	Committee & Date	Minute Reference
Standards Committee Membership	Standards Committee – 22 nd January 2007	ST28