
REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 18 APRIL 2006

1 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS AND PARISH MEMBER/S FROM 2006/07

1.1 This item of business was referred by the Standards Committee on 18 April 2006 to Full Council with recommendations relating to the appointment of Independent Members and Parish Members to the Standards Committee from the next Municipal Year.

1.2 The Committee noted that:-

- Whilst the Authority had previously determined that it would be appropriate for appointments to be on the basis of a four-year term, there was no statutory requirement. There was also no reason why an Independent Member could not review his/her own position during a term of office.
- The Standards Board for England advises that it is important for Independent Members to be seen as impartial.
- If existing Independent Member appointees are not re-appointed, the Authority would need to go through a process of advertising.
- The Standards Board for England had made a number of observations on the role of Parish Members and was now recommending that there should be two appointees. Such an arrangement is likely to be appropriate given that, statistically, when cases do arise they frequently involve Parish Councillors (and a Parish Member has to be present at an associated hearing).
- The Parish Member is appointed by the Rochford Hundred Association of Local Councils.

1.3 The Committee felt that, subject to the agreement of the current Independent Member appointees, there would be merit in inviting them to continue in office. There was no reason to question their impartiality and it would be unfortunate to lose such valuable contributors to the Council's work. Reference was made to the fact that, to date, the Committee had not had to consider complaints or allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct, which meant that the Independent Members had not had an opportunity to fulfil a key aspect of their role. It was observed that the skill-set of Independent Members could be transferable across authorities and that, technically, there appears to be no reason why an Independent Member could not serve more than one authority.

1.4 Mr B M Flynn indicated that he would be prepared to be appointed for a further term. Mr A C Comber indicated that he too would be prepared to be further appointed, subject to reserving the right to re-assess the situation in due course following implementation of the proposed legislation/regulations extending the role of the Standards Committee and introducing local investigation and determination of complaints. The Corporate Director (Internal Services) confirmed that the position with regard to Mr D J Cottis could be clarified separately.

1.5 It is proposed that the Council **RESOLVES:-**

- (1) That the current Independent Members be appointed for a further term of four years.
- (2) That the composition of the Standards Committee be changed to provide that membership comprises two Members of a Parish Council wholly or mainly in the Council's area (a Parish Member). The Rochford Hundred Association of local Councils to be asked to determine the appointees. (CD(IS))

Sarah Fowler

Head of Administrative and Member Services

Background Papers:-

None

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