

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

31ST MARCH 2009

TERMS OF OFFICE OF PARISH COUNCILS' REPRESENTATIVES ON THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Roger Smith
Responsible Head of Service	Claire Felton, Monitoring Officer
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks the views of the Standards Committee on proposals to extend, for the 2009 appointments, the current terms of office of the Parish Councils' Representatives (which includes the Deputy Parish Councils' Representative) on the Committee, and for a further review of the terms of office of the parish representatives to take place in 2011, in line with the next round of Parish Council elections.
- 1.2 The Bromsgrove Area Committee of the Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils ("CALC") has considered and supports the proposals.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Members recommend to full Council:

- 2.1 that the terms of office of the Parish Councils' Representatives on the Standards Committee for 2009 be extended from one year to two years; and
- 2.2 that a further review of the terms of office of the parish representatives be undertaken in 2011, following the next round of Parish Council elections.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The District Council's Standards Committee comprises: three Independent Members; three Members of the authority (district councillors); two Parish Councils' Representatives; and a (non-voting) Deputy Parish Councils' Representative (who acts, when required, as a substitute for the Parish Councils' Representatives).
- 3.2 Historically, the Council has appointed parish representatives on the Standards Committee for a one year term of office. The term of office of the Committee's Independent Members is four years, with Independent

Members being permitted to serve a maximum two terms of office. District councillor appointments are made annually and there are no restrictions as to the length of time a district councillor may serve on the Committee.

- 3.3 Nominations for the Parish Councils' Representatives on the Standards Committee are considered by the Bromsgrove Area Committee of the Worcestershire CALC in June of each year and formal appointments are made by full Council in July.
- 3.4 Following the introduction, in May 2008, of the local assessment of complaints against parish and district councillors for alleged breaches of their authority's Code of Conduct, a function which transferred from the Standards Board for England to standards committees, the Parish Councils' Representatives have taken on a more significant role on the Standards Committee and have also assisted in the development of the new regime.
- 3.5 In order to equip members of the Standards Committee in carrying out their functions the Council has recently arranged training sessions, which have been conducted by external experts, on the role of standards committees, local assessment and the model Code of Conduct. The training, which has taken place at significant expense to the Council, has been attended by all three current parish representatives. In view of the costs involved, it is not anticipated that training of this nature will take place annually. General training in ethical governance issues will however be conducted by the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer as and when required.
- 3.6 The Parish Councils' Representatives also act as a link between the Standards Committee and the Bromsgrove Area Committee of the Worcestershire CALC. Regular items appear on the agendas of both Committees to enable information to be passed on to the parish councils and to enable the parish councils to feed back information to the Standards Committee. Any extension to the current terms of office of the parish representatives would assist with the continuity of this link.
- 3.7 A lengthier term of office for the Parish Councils' Representatives might also be beneficial as it would ensure that the experience gained by parish representatives is both retained and built upon over a more realistic and relevant period of time. As such, it is suggested that the terms of office of the parish representatives for the July 2009 appointments might be extended to two years, thus taking appointments through to 2011, when the next round of parish council elections will take place.
- 3.8 If agreed, it is proposed that a further review of the terms of office of the parish representatives take place in 2011, following the parish council elections. Such a review might include, for example, looking at the possibility of four year terms of office, which would give parity to parish council and Independent Member appointments.

- 3.9 At its meeting on 4th March 2009 the Bromsgrove Area Committee of the Worcestershire CALC considered the proposals on the terms of office of the Parish Councils' Representatives and was in support of these. Any recommendations from the Standards Committee will be referred to full Council on 29th April 2009 for final decision. This timetable will allow clarity on the position prior to the Bromsgrove Area Committee's consideration, in June, of the 2009 nominations.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council's Constitution requires all members of Council committees to be trained in that committee's subject area. Any extension to the current one year term of office of the Parish Councils' Representatives on the Standards Committee would reduce the frequency of training for parish representatives, which would see savings in both officer time and training costs.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Local Government Act 2000 provides that the Secretary of State may, by regulations, make provision as to the size and composition of standards committees of relevant authorities in England. The Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 require that where an authority is a responsible authority, it must ensure that at least two members of the standards committee are members of parish councils for which it is responsible, who are not also members of the responsible authority. The Regulations also state that, subject to having regard to any relevant guidance issued by the Standards Board in making an appointment, an authority may adopt such procedures as it thinks fit for the appointment to the standards committee of members of parish councils.

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

This report is linked to Council objective 2 - Improvement.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are no significant risks associated with this report.

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

None

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

None

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

None

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues - None
Personnel Implications - None
Governance/Performance Management - None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 - None
Policy - None
Environmental - None

12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	No
Chief Executive	No
Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects	No
Executive Director - Services	No
Assistant Chief Executive	No
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	No
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

13. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards

14. APPENDICES

None

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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