

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

5 APRIL 2007

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ROLE AND COMPOSITION OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mrs. C.J. Spencer
Responsible Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal and Democratic Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The role and composition of the Standards Committee is under review in light of the current review of the Constitution and the recent Ethical Governance Health Check.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the matters which it is proposed should be referred to Standards Committee.
- 2.2 To consider suggestions for changes to the role and composition of the Standards Committee for consideration by Council.

3. BACKGROUND

Role of Standards Committee

- 3.1 It has become apparent during the current review of the Constitution that the Standards Committee is not fulfilling its constitutional role and is not being used to its full potential. This has also been noted in the Ethical Governance Health Check undertaken by the IDeA. In addition to any recommendations arising from this Committee's consideration of the IDeA's findings, it is proposed that the following matters will be routinely considered by the Standards Committee from the start of the next municipal year.
- a. monitoring and reviewing the nature of allegations made to the Standards Board in respect of district and parish councillors whether or not they are referred for investigation locally or by the Standards Board to enable the Standards Committee;

- b. monitoring and reviewing the operation of the Constitution in terms of ensuring that the processes and procedures set out in the Constitution are being followed in practice;
 - c. monitoring and reviewing the operation of the Council's whistle blowing policy;
 - d. monitoring and reviewing the complaints handling and ombudsman investigations;
 - e. monitoring and reviewing the operation of the Protocol on Member-Officer Relations
 - f. monitoring and reviewing the operation of the Protocol on Member-Member Relations;
 - e. undertaking a more pro-active approach towards the parish councils within the district in terms of promoting and maintaining standards of conduct, assisting parish councillors to observe the Code and highlighting issues where training may be required.
- 3.2 In relation to matters falling under paragraphs a, c, d, e and f, the Monitoring Officer will report quarterly to enable the Standards Committee which will be able determine if any trends emerge which require action either by training or otherwise

Composition of the Standards Committee

- 3.3 Proposals for amendment to the Constitution include consideration of changes to the Standards Committee as follows:
- a. no substitutes should be allowed. The purpose is to ensure that only those members who have received appropriate training should sit on the Committee;
 - b. increasing the number of parish representatives to two. This is in line with Standards Board guidance. It also allows the Committee more flexibility in dealing with determinations involving parish councillors in the event that one parish representative is unable to attend (and for this reason the two parish representatives should be drawn from different parish councils);
 - c. reducing the number of independent representatives to two on the expiry of the term of office of one of the current members; it is a statutory requirement that at least 25% of the Committee should be independent members;

- d. reducing the number of District Councillors to three and removing the requirement currently included in the Constitution for there to be political balance. It is intended that the District Councillors will be cross-party. The purpose of this proposal and that in c. above is to follow Standards Board guidance that the Standards Committee should be above party politics and to ensure a better balance between independent representatives and those from the different tiers of local government.

3.4 Members are requested to consider these proposals which will be taken into account when the Constitution is revised.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6. CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

6.1 Corporate Objective – Improvement, Priority – Reputation.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 There is no risk associated with this report.

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None.

9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues	None
Personnel Implications	None
Governance/Performance Management	The Code of Conduct is one of the fundamental aspects of good governance
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998	None
Policy	None
Environmental	None
Equalities and Diversity	None

10. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	No
Acting Chief Executive	No
Corporate Director (Services)	No
Assistant Chief Executive	No
Head of Service	N/a
Head of Financial Services	No
Head of Legal & Democratic Services	N/a
Head of Organisational Development & HR	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

11. APPENDICES

None

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The IDeA Ethical Governance Health Check

CONTACT OFFICER

Name: Claire Felton, Monitoring Officer
E Mail: c.felton@bromsgrove.gov.uk
Tel: (01527) 881429