

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Council

22 July 2010

AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / Executive Director (Corporate Services)

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT AND PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2010-14

Purpose

1. To seek Council's co-option to the Standards Committee of the independent candidates recommended for appointment by the Standards Committee Appointments Panel, and of the parish council candidate identified for appointment by a ballot of South Cambridgeshire parish and community councils and meetings.
2. These are not key decisions but have been brought to Council because only the full Council may co-opt members to any constituent body of the authority (other than the Scrutiny and Overview Committee).

Recommendations and Reasons

3. That, in agreement with the recommendations of the Standards Committee Appointments Panel, Council resolve to co-opt Mrs Diane Best, Mr Raith Overhill and Mr Eric Revell to the Standards Committee as independent members for four years, 2010-14; and
4. That, in agreement with the results of the ballot of South Cambridgeshire parish and community councils and meetings, Council resolve to co-opt Councillor Iain Booth, Cambourne Parish Council, to the Standards Committee as a parish council member for four years, 2010-14. The potential new members have provided brief biographical notes for the information of Council, which are appended to this report.
5. That Council formally thank Ms Georgina Butcher, independent member 2006-10 and Chairman 2008/09, and Councillor Dave Kelleway, parish council member 2006-10, for their contribution to the Standards Committee and service to the residents of South Cambridgeshire.

Background

6. Standards for England writes that the role of the independent member¹ "is to help increase public confidence and provide a clear signal that the committee is fair. The independent representative also brings a wider perspective from outside experiences." It is a legislative requirement that independent members chair the Standards Committee and all its panels, and that the Standards Committee have a minimum 25% independent membership; independent members serve a four-year term on the Standards Committee and remain eligible for re-appointment.
7. Where an authority has a responsibility for parish council matters, it is also a legislative requirement that the Standards Committee have at least one parish council

¹ 'Independent' in this context means simply a person who is not a member or officer of the Council, any parish council in the district or any other relevant authority – "the relevant authorities". It has no connotation with political independence from any party or political group.

representative. Any committee or panel meetings considering parish council matters are required to have at least one parish council member present to be quorate.

8. The role of the Standards Committee has transformed dramatically since its initial establishment in 2000, and in 2008 it assumed responsibility for the initial assessment of all misconduct allegations. The Committee also is responsible for directing the investigations for, and final determination of, most allegations, with Standards for England retaining responsibility only for assessing and investigating the most serious misconduct allegations. Given the large numbers of parish councillors in South Cambridgeshire, all of whom fall within the remit of the Standards Committee, the workload for this committee has increased greatly, and the Council has responded by increasing the size of the Standards Committee to ensure that the workload is evenly spread.
9. Until current legislation is repealed and new legislation is enacted, the responsibilities of the Standards Committee remain unchanged. The government's forthcoming Decentralisation and Localism Bill will, between November 2010 and November 2011, abolish Standards for England and transfer to local authorities all responsibility for assessing and investigating the most serious misconduct allegations. Existing legislation, if not amended or repealed, will enable the establishment of joint standards committees with neighbouring authorities to ensure that such matters can be handled without any potential conflicts of interest.
10. This Council's procedure for recruitment and retention of independent members, with a formal application pack, job description and person specification, was singled out as an example of notable practise in Standards for England's 2008-09 Annual Review. In accordance with the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008, the vacancies were advertised in the spring 2010 edition of *South Cambs magazine*, in the *Cambridge News* on 26 May 2010, and on the Council's website, from which the application pack could be downloaded. Three applicants were shortlisted for interviews, following which the Appointments Panel recommended that all three be appointed.
11. This Council's procedure for recruitment of parish council members also has a clear job description and guideline person specification listing those qualities which *might* be beneficial to a person serving on the Standards Committee. This information was sent to all parishes on 15 February 2010 along with a request for nominations. Ballots were issued to all parishes on 11 June 2010, with a return deadline of noon on Friday 9 July 2010. The Monitoring Officer counted the ballots and declared that Councillor Iain Booth had been elected for co-option by the Council.

Options

12. To co-opt the candidates as recommended by the Appointments Panel and identified by the parish council ballot. This would bring membership of the Standards Committee to nineteen, of whom seven would be council members, four would be parish members and eight would be independent members. Training of the new council, parish and independent members will be undertaken before the 15 September 2010 Standards Committee meeting.
13. Not to co-opt the candidates recommended by the Appointments Panel and identified by the parish council ballot. This would not leave the Council in breach of the legal requirement to have at least 25% independent membership and one parish council member, but could require the continuing independent and parish council members to

undertake a significant proportion of the Committee's workload, increasing the risk of conflicts of interest arising.

Implications

14.	Financial	<p>As part of the Members' Allowances Scheme, independent members receive a co-optees' allowance of £276 per annum, and parish council members receive a co-optees' allowance of £220 per annum, reflecting the different requirements of the two roles. Both are eligible to claim the same for travel, subsistence and carers' expenses as members of the Council. The independent member who serves as the Standards Committee Chairman also receives a special responsibility allowance of £443. Other than inflationary adjustments, these amounts have remained unchanged since their introduction on 1 April 2004. An independent panel reviews the Scheme annually and the final agreement rests with Council.</p> <p>The Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England (AIMSce) was established in 2006 to provide peer group support, champion the role of independent members and represent their interests. The Council pays the £20 per member annual fee.</p>
	Legal	<p>The Standards Committee is required by statute to have at least 25% independent membership and parish council representation at any meeting considering parish council matters. The Constitution requires the Standards Committee to have 'at least four' independent members and 'at least three' parish members.</p>
	Staffing	<p>None specific.</p>
	Risk Management	<p>Standards Committee and panel meetings require that at least one independent member be present, and that an independent member serve as Chairman, in order to be quorate; it is also a legislative requirement that a parish council member be present for any meetings considering parish council matters. Having a greater number of independent and parish council members reduces the risk of meetings becoming inquorate.</p>
	Equal Opportunities	<p>None specific.</p>
	Climate Change	<p>Training sessions are arranged for all members of the Standards Committee, including training on hearings panels and procedures, and most training is held either immediately before or after a Standards Committee meeting to minimise travel, and the majority of independent members car share.</p>

Consultations

15. None.

Effect on Strategic Aims and Values

16. Making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live: the Standards Committee has an important role to play in the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct.

17. Providing a voice for rural life: The Standards Committee works with neighbouring authorities and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CPALC) to offer training and advice to district and parish councillors.
18. Customer Service: Names and contact information of Standards Committee members are published on the Council's website, and committee members may act as a point of contact for members of the public seeking advice about ethical standards in local government.

Conclusions / Summary

19. The three independent member candidates have demonstrated via their applications and interviews particularly useful previous experience that would be useful to the Standards Committee and had researched the roles of the Standards Committee and of the independent member. The parish council member candidate has received the support of South Cambridgeshire parish and community councils and meetings. Council is asked to co-opt these members onto the Standards Committee for four-year terms, 2010-14.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Appointments of Independent Members – Monitoring Officer's Reports to Council 22 November 2001, 28 September 2006
Local Government Acts 2000, 2003
Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) Regulations 2001
Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008
SCDC Constitution
Standards for England Guidance on Standards Committees

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Independent Members 2010-14

Diane Best

I was born and brought up in Cambridge. Apart from the six years I spent in London at college and then teaching in Hackney, I have lived in Cambridge.

My career, from which I have recently retired, has been in Education as a teacher. For the last 10 years I have worked as a part – time tutor at Cambridge Arts and Sciences teaching GCSE Biology, together with Personal, Social and Health Education. I enjoyed the challenge of teaching international students many of whom used English as a second language. Prior to this I worked full time in the state sector at St. Bede's School. During my career I have always been a classroom teacher, but have also had middle management pastoral responsibilities. One of these responsibilities was a designated responsibility for Child Protection.

One of my teachers inspired me to become involved in voluntary work when I was still at school. I have always focussed my volunteering on activities that aim to benefit the community. I am currently a Governor of Cherry Hinton Infants School and the Leaseholder representative on Cambridge City Council's Housing Management Board. From 2000 to 2005, I served the Cambridge Federation of Tenants, Leaseholders and Residents as Company Secretary in a voluntary capacity.

During my career and voluntary activities I have experience of committee work and the procedures for meetings. I am keenly interested in local issues. There have been occasions in both my career and voluntary activities when I have sensitively had to promote high standards and offer support and training to ensure they were maintained.

I have knowledge and skills which I can use to make a positive contribution to the work of the Standards Committee as an Independent Member. In my designated role for child protection I had to handle sensitive matters with tact and diplomacy. Developing good communication skills, both written and oral have been very important to me. There have been situations when I needed to be assertive, such as meetings with some parents. I have an impartial, unbiased and objective approach to issues and review all the facts before making a decision.

As an Independent Member of the Standards Committee I would be part of the team that ensures high standards are maintained, particularly with regard to integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness and honesty. I will have the opportunity to use my experience, knowledge and skills to make a significant contribution to an aspect of public life which I feel is very important. It is also an opportunity to broaden my experience. I fully understand the need for confidentiality and can be relied on to comply with it, as I have done both professionally and in my voluntary activities.

Raith Overhill

Born in Cambridge, married to Morag SRN; with two grown up sons. Professionally, worked as a Medical / Scientific Illustrator and Publisher for some 40 years, now semi-retired.

Qualifications include BA Graphic Design, Human Anatomy, Professional member of The Institute of Medical Illustration; Registered Medical Illustration Practitioner.

I have served as a Cambridge City Councillor, with some 16 years' service, having chaired Housing, Environmental Health, Direct Works, Licensing and Staff committees. Stepping down in 2002 to move to Scotland for family reasons. I have also served on many public

bodies. Cambridgeshire Rating Valuation Tribunal, Health Council and School governorships to name a few.

Previous Board memberships: 100 Housing Association 1999-2004, Scottish Institute of Medical Illustration, Syllabus Chairman 2003-2007; South Cambridgeshire Village Homes Shadow Board Chairman 2008-2009.

Trustee & Directorships: Dialogue Trust 1995-2004; Angus Independent Advocacy 2004-2007; Fife – Community Volunteer Service, 2003-2007.

Current positions: Cambridge City Magistrate, appointed 1996-to date; Bench Chairman of Appraisal & Mentor Panel; Volunteer, Huntingdon Coroners Court; Editorial Board Member, 'Journal of Visual Communications in Medicine'.

Interests: Sailing, Rowing, Gardening, Charity work and my local Church.

Eric Revell

Eric Revell moved to Little Eversden 32 years ago upon appointment to the University of Cambridge where he specialised in human resource management. His career spanned time in industry as well as the public sector.

Until June 2006 Mr Revell was Non Executive Director and Vice Chairman of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital Trust. Appointments are for a maximum of Ten years.

Because of his wide experience in human resource management he was called upon to Chair all inquiries into probity, integrity and general levels of conduct amongst clinicians, nursing and technical staff and all administrative staff. He also Chaired disciplinary hearings and hearings regarding Serious Untoward Incidents in hospital. Mr Revell believes much of this work is similar to that of an Independent Member.

Mr Revell also has experience of local government and in the early 1970s was a Councillor in a Non County Borough. He has not been active in politics since that time.

In July 2006 he was elected as a Governor on the Board of Addenbrooke's Hospital and was re-elected for a further three years in 2009.

Mr Revell has been an independent member of the Standards Committee since 2006 and currently chairs the Assessment Panel which is the first stage of the complaints procedure.

Parish Council Member 2010-14

Councillor Iain Booth, Cambourne Parish Council

I have been a Cambourne resident since 2000 and in that time I have seen many changes in the community and the impact they have had on residents, some positive and others not so. I am very committed to Cambourne and enjoy living here and have always felt I could give something back and help shape and develop the community in the future. Through my varied work experience I believe I would bring a balanced, fair, and considered view to the standards board. I have a hands on approach coupled with an analytical and enquiring mind which I hope would add to the debate and assist in achieving effective solutions. I would be committed to the role and carry it out to the best of my ability.

Kind regards

Cllr Iain Booth Cambourne Parish Council