

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Standards Committee

11 June 2008

AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / Democratic Services Officer

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT CO- OPTED MEMBERS

Purpose

1. To consider the current procedure for Independent Co-opted member appointment to Standards Committee in light of the recently published Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008, which impose a duty on Standards Committee to establish sub-committees (panels), on which there shall be at least one Independent Co-opted Member. The Panels shall be chaired by Independent Co-opted Members

Background

2. Mr Peter Brindle is retiring, leaving 4 Independent Co-opted Members currently on Standards Committee. The Local Assessment of Complaints will increase the workload of Standards Committee through its Panels and necessitate further appointments. Appointments to Standards Committee are ratified by Council on the recommendation of the Appointments Panel of Standards Committee. The size and composition of the Appointments Panel is delegated to the Chairman of Standards Committee in consultation with the Monitoring Officer. The current procedure last used in 2007 is set out in Appendix A to this report

Considerations

3. The Standards Committee is recommended elsewhere on the agenda to establish sub-committees; an Assessment Panel, a Review Panel, and a Hearings Panel. The membership of the Assessment Panel for a particular matter cannot overlap with that of the Review Panel when the latter considers the same matter. The Regulations are silent on the issue of any overlap with any Hearings Sub-Committee but it is possible that any such overlap could give rise to a perception of bias. In order to ensure sufficient Independent Co-opted member representation on these panels it is considered that 6 Independent Co-opted members are required.

Options

4. Standards Committee should review the selection and appointment procedure and if thought suitable should initiate the recruitment process forthwith.

Implications

5.

Financial	None specific
Legal	The Authority might be unable to fulfil its obligations set down by statute without strengthening Standards Committee
Staffing	None specific
Risk Management	Failure to populate sub-committees and thus not determine Assessments, Reviews, and Hearings within set deadlines
Equal Opportunities	None specific

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

6.	Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future
	None specific
	Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community
	None specific
	Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work
	None specific

Conclusions/Summary

7. The Committee must establish and appoint the various Panels as set down within the Regulations. To do this satisfactorily there needs to be an early appointment of a further 2 Independent Co-opted members to Standards Committee.

Recommendations

- 8.
- (a) That the Monitoring Officer initiate the procedure to appoint a further 2 Independent Co-opted members to Standards Committee
 - (b) That Standards Committee create a Task and Finish group to review the procedure for future appointments.

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

SCDC Constitution,
Minutes of Standard Committee 7 June 2007,
Local Assessment of Complaints Guidance booklet of the Standards Board for England.
SBE Guidance: "The Role and Make-up of Standards Committees" (May 2008)

Contact Officer: Joe Brown – Democratic Services Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713030

Appendix A

APPOINTMENT PROCEDURE FOR INDEPENDENT CO-OPTED MEMBERS TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

a. Publicity

An advertisement would be included in the Summer 2007 edition of South Cambs Magazine and in the Cambridge Evening News, accompanied by a press release on the Council's website (which would also include downloadable application forms), copied to local media, free weekly papers and to village newsletters. If published as expected in June 2007, the Standards Committee Newsletter, sent to all Parish Councils and Meetings, would also refer to the vacancies, making clear that any applicants must not be connected to any local authority.

Private sector bodies like the CBI and Institute of Directors should be asked to disseminate information about the appointments. Members of the Group were asked to contact the Democratic Services Officer with details of bodies to approach.

b. Application Form

Knowledge and experience of committee work and meeting procedures would be an essential criterion.

Access to internet and e-mail would be included as a desirable criterion.

Applicants would be advised that they could continue their responses to questions on separate sheets if required, and that they were welcome to include any additional information or statement which they felt was relevant, including but not limited to attaching a CV, as long as they answered all the questions on the application form.

Rather than being included as part of the application form, a separate sheet asking questions about age, ethnicity and disabilities would be enclosed with the application pack, responses to which would be kept for statistical purposes only and not disclosed to the appointments panel.

c. Application Process

Shortlisted candidates would be asked at interview to confirm that their responses given to the tickboxes on the application form were still true and accurate.

If possible, at least three new independent members should be appointed at the end of the 2007/08 exercise.

The Appointments Panel would conduct the short-listing and interview processes at the Council offices. The Standards Committee Chairman would appoint the Panel as per the Constitution. Members interested in serving on the Panel would be invited to e-mail the Chairman.