

Rotherham Borough Council - Report to Members and Independent Members

1.	Meeting:	Standards Committee
2.	Date:	27 th September 2012
3.	Title:	The Localism Act 2011 and the Standards Regime - Current Position
4.	Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

Cabinet and Council have previously endorsed the preparation of a revised Code of Conduct, the establishment of a new Standards Committee and other arrangements to support the standards regime introduced by the Localism Act 2011.

This report outlines the arrangements that have been adopted by the Council to ensure the maintenance of high ethical standards.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:-

1. notes the content of the report, and
2. agrees the composition of a Panel and dates for interviewing for the appointment of the Independent Person.

7. Proposals and Details

Code of Conduct

The Council delegated the revision of the Code to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Leader of the Opposition. The new Code largely reflects the previous Code with revisions to meet the requirements of the Act, in particular in respect of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests. The finalised Code is attached at Appendix 1 and is available on the website.

Standards Committee

Council has approved that the new Standards Committee, which is to be a joint committee, be composed of eight Elected Members, three Parish Council representatives and five Independent Members (who are non-voting members). It should be noted that, to demonstrate the objectivity of the Committee, none of those nominations of Elected Members are of Cabinet Members and that two of the nominations are from the opposition group.

The Council's nominations of elected members are Councillors Beck, Gilding, Gosling, Middleton, Pitchley, P. G. Russell, Sims and Tweed.

The Council approved that the five independent members of the previous Standards Committee shall be independent members of the new Standards Committee. They are Mrs A Bingham, Mr I Daines, Mr P Elder, Mr G Musson and Ms J Porter and they shall serve for a term of four years.

Independent Person

This is a statutory appointee whose role is to support the maintenance of high standards of ethical behaviour. A recruitment exercise in July was not successful and a further exercise is now being undertaken. In the meantime the Independent Person for Doncaster Borough Council (Mr P Beavers) has been approached and indicated his willingness to act as the Independent Person for the Council should any urgent matters arise. The Council approved this arrangement, pending the formal appointment of an Independent Person.

The closing date for the recruitment process is 28th September. Council has agreed that the recruitment should be conducted by the former chair and three former members of the Standards Committee.

The Committee is requested to agree the composition of a Panel and the dates for interviewing the applicants.

Allowances

The following allowances were approved:-

- The Chair of the Committee - £3,500 p.a.
- Vice Chair - £2,500 p.a.
- Independent Members - travel and subsistence, in accordance with the Scheme provided for Co-opted Members.
- Independent Person - £710 p.a., inclusive of travel and subsistence

Parish Councils

To date 16 Parish Councils have indicated that they wish to participate in the Council's Standards Committee. The Yorkshire Local Council's Association is to run the election to select three representatives to sit upon the Committee.

Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer will report to the next meeting on the procedure to consider allegations, whether amendments are required to the Terms of Reference of the Committee and on the outcome of the election of Parish Council representatives.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The establishment of the new arrangements will meet the requirements of the Act and minimise risk and uncertainty with regard to the ethical standards of elected members.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Having a Standards Committee and a Code of Conduct for members supports the objective of being an effective Council and is a component of sound governance.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

None

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