



Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance)

Standards Committee

Date: 8th July 2009

Subject: Appointment of Independent and Parish Members

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Committee of the outcome of the Standards Committee appointments approved by Full Council at its annual meeting on 21st May 2009.
2. Members of the Committee are asked to:
 - Note the appointment of Mrs J Austin to the role of Independent Member until the Annual Meeting in 2013;
 - Note the appointment of Mr G Tollefson to the role of reserve Independent Member until the Annual Meeting in 2010 or earlier should a vacancy arise when he will then become a full Independent Member for a four year term;
 - Note the appointment of Councillor P Cook to the role of Parish Member until the Annual Meeting in 2013; and
 - Note the reappointment of Councillor Mrs Walker as a Parish Member until the Annual Meeting in 2013.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Committee of the Standards Committee appointments approved by Full Council at its annual meeting on 21st May 2009.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Further to the introduction of the Local Assessment regime and the subsequent difficulties encountered in relation to the membership of the Standards Committee, Members resolved to recommend to General Purposes Committee that the membership of the Standards Committee be increased to include two additional Leeds City Councillors, one additional Independent Member and one additional Parish Member. General Purposes Committee agreed to recommend this proposal to Full Council, and the new membership was approved on 22nd April 2009. A recruitment exercise was therefore undertaken, and additional Independent and Parish members were appointed to the Standards Committee by Full Council at its annual meeting on 21st May 2009.

Independent Member position

- 2.2 Applicants for the position of Independent Member were asked to submit an application form, and applicants were then shortlisted against a role description which highlights essential and desirable criteria. Five candidates were shortlisted for this position and interviewed by a panel comprised of the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) and the Chair of the Standards Committee.
- 2.3 At the end of the process the interview panel felt that there were two candidates for the Independent Member role who were worthy of recommendation for appointment. These were Mrs J Austin and Mr G Tollefson. Both these candidates met all the essential requirements of the role and demonstrated three of the four desirable requirements in their application. However, as there was only one vacancy the interview panel decided to recommend the appointment of Mrs J Austin.
- 2.4 Given that the current Chair of the Standards Committee is due to retire at the Annual Meeting in 2010, the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) also recommended that Mr Tollefson be appointed as a reserve Independent Member in order to fill the Independent Member vacancy when it arises. A reserve Independent Member is not a formal member of the Standards Committee, and is not able to vote, but may speak at the discretion of the Chair. They are allowed to attend meetings of the Standards Committee to observe the proceedings and for training purposes. They are not allowed to act as a substitute for another Independent Member, or take part in Assessment or Review Sub-Committee meetings (other than as an observer, for development purposes, and with the consent of all parties). The main benefits of appointing a reserve member are as follows:
- The Council will not have to repeat the recruitment exercise in April 2010 in order to replace the vacancy due to arise in May 2010. The cost of the recruitment exercise was £3605.20. This amount does not include officer time or administration costs. However it should also be noted that officers supporting the Independent Remuneration Panel, of which Mr Tollefson is a Member, will have to conduct a similar recruitment exercise to replace him;

- If Mr Tollefson is appointed as a full Independent Member at the Annual Meeting in 2010, he will already have gained some experience of the Standards Committee and the Council's operations, and will have received training in accordance with the Standards Committee Training Plan;
- Should a vacancy arise prior to the Annual Meeting in 2010, for example due to a resignation, the Standards Committee will be able to fill this vacancy immediately, which would assist with the timely processing of complaints; and
- Finally, if the Council were to repeat the recruitment exercise for an Independent Member in 2010 there would be no guarantee that applicants of a similar calibre (meeting all the essential criteria and the majority of the desirable criteria) would apply.

2.5 Full Council approved both appointments at its annual meeting on 21st May 2009.

Parish Member position

2.6 Candidates for the position of Parish Member were nominated by their Town or Parish Council at the request of the Yorkshire Local Councils Association (YLCA). The six nominees received were then interviewed by an interview panel comprised of the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance), the Chair of the Standards Committee and Councillor J Priestley (a current Parish Member on the Standards Committee). The panel decided to recommend the appointment of Councillor P Cook of Morley Town Council.

2.7 As Councillor Mrs Walker's first term of office ended at the annual meeting in 2009, she was asked to confirm that she wished to continue as a Parish Member of the Standards Committee, and the YLCA were asked to confirm whether they supported her reappointment. Following confirmation from the YLCA that they would support her reappointment unopposed, the interview panel decided to recommend to Full Council that Councillor Mrs Walker should be reappointed for a further term of office. Parish Members are also appointed for terms of office of four years, but there is no restriction on the number of terms they may serve.

2.8 Full Council also approved these appointments at its annual meeting on 21st May 2009.

3.0 Main Issues

Mrs J Austin – Independent Member

3.1 Until September 2008 Mrs Austin worked for KPMG as a principal advisor within KPMG's Financial Services Advisory Group, which involved working as a project leader on a variety of strategic, regulatory and costing projects, and acting as the independent accountant in a number of Office of Fair Trading regulated assignments. Mrs Austin left this position to pursue other interests.

3.2 Mrs Austin has extensive experience of understanding and applying regulatory produced standards in a practical setting; chairing committees and working parties; and reviewing, analysing and investigating data, both financial and non-financial. Mrs Austin also recently completed a degree in psychology from the Open University.

Mr G Tollefson – reserve Independent Member

- 3.3 Mr Tollefson retired from the NHS in January 2006 where he worked as a Senior Ambulance Service Manager. In 2007 and 2008 Mr Tollefson undertook some part time project work for St John Ambulance (South & West Yorkshire) in addition to being a senior volunteer with that organisation.
- 3.4 Mr Tollefson has served as a Magistrate in Leeds since 1994 and chairs Courts on a regular basis. In 2008 Mr Tollefson was appointed by the Ministry of Justice to the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee for Leeds, which is the body that handles all matters relating to standards, discipline and governance within the Leeds Magistrates' Courts.
- 3.5 Since retiring, Mr Tollefson has joined the Board of a large Practice Based Commissioning Group of General Practitioners in East and South Leeds, and has recently been invited by HM Lord Lieutenant for West Yorkshire to serve as one of her Deputies. Mr Tollefson was also currently a member of the Leeds City Council Independent Remuneration Panel, until he was appointed to the Standards Committee (as the relevant Regulations prevent a co-opted Member of the Council being on the Independent Remuneration Panel).

Councillor P Cook – Parish Member

- 3.6 Councillor Cook was elected to Morley Town Council in 2007. He is a member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- 3.7 Councillor Cook was a police officer for 30 years and retired in 1999. Councillor Cook has also previously worked as a security manager for art galleries and museums owned by Leeds City Council.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 4.1 The successful candidates all conform with the legal requirements for the positions, which are set out in Article 9 of the Council's Constitution.
- 4.2 Having a high calibre of membership of the Standards Committee will assist the Council in meeting the principle of 'good conduct and behaviour' in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

- 5.1 The position of Independent Member attracts an allowance of £2,366 per annum, and the position of Parish Member attracts an allowance of £570 per annum. However both these sums can be met from within existing resources.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 Full Council approved the appointment of Mrs J Austin to the role of Independent Member of the Standards Committee, and Councillor P Cook to the role of Parish Member, both with effect from 21st May 2009. Full Council also approved the appointment of Mr G Tollefson as a reserve Independent Member until the Annual Meeting in 2010, in order that he can then be appointed as the Independent Member to fill the vacancy for such a Member left by Mr M Wilkinson when his final

term of office expires. Finally, Full Council approved the reappointment of Councillor Mrs Walker to the role of Parish Member for a further term.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Members of the Committee are asked to note:

- The appointment of Mrs J Austin to the role of Independent Member until the Annual Meeting in 2013;
- The appointment of Mr G Tollefson to the role of reserve Independent Member until the Annual Meeting in 2010 or earlier should a vacancy arise when he will then become a full Independent Member for a four year term;
- The appointment of Councillor P Cook to the role of Parish Member until the Annual Meeting in 2013; and
- The reappointment of Councillor Mrs P Walker to the role of Parish Member until the Annual Meeting in 2013.

Background Documents

Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008

Report to Full Council, 'Appointment of additional Independent, reserve Independent and Parish Members of Standards Committee', 21st May 2009