

Report of	Meeting	Date
Monitoring Officer	Standards Committee	11 December 2008

APPOINTMENT OF PARISH MEMBERS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To seek Members support to a process for appointing new Parish Council Members to the Standards Committee.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- That a panel be appointed to interview prospective Members and the recruitment pack and process be approved.
- That the Standards Committee recommend to Council that there should be three Parish Council Members on the Committee.
- That the Committee should give recommendations as to the term of office of Parish Councillors.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region		Develop local solutions to climate change.	
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances		Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	
Involving people in their communities		Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	✓

BACKGROUND

- Some time ago the Standards Committee recommended to Council that there should be an increase in the number of Parish Councillors on the Standards Committee in order to ensure that the Committee could fulfil its local filtering obligations. Council agreed that there should be two Parish Councillors on the Standards Committee. However, since that time guidance has emerged from the Standards Board recommending that a Committee should have three Parish Council representatives in order to ensure that sufficient Members are available to deal with local filtering decisions and reviews against those decisions and to provide some capacity in the event of Members being unavailable. The Committee therefore may wish to make a recommendation to Council along these lines.
- The appointment of Parish Members to the Standards Committee has to be made in consultation with the Parishes. Accordingly, the Parish Councils have been invited to

submit nominations. Heapey Parish Council have confirmed that they would wish the present Parish Council representative on the Standards Committee, Parish Councillor Joan Geddes, to continue in office. Given the implications of implementing the new Standards arrangements there is much to be said for retaining some of the existing experience on the Standards Committee and my recommendation would be that Mrs Geddes should be invited to continue as a Parish Councillor as a Standards Committee representative at least until May 2010. The Standards Committee may though wish to take the opportunity to consider whether it would be wise to fix terms of office for Members.

5. In addition to Mrs Geddes five other nominations have been made and a process therefore needs to be agreed for making a recommendation to Council. It is suggested that an appointment panel should be established from within the membership of the Committee to make that recommendation. It will be necessary to have some criteria upon which to base the appointment recommendation and some suggested criteria are contained in the recruitment pack which is annexed to this report. It is suggested that each of the nominated Councillors should be invited to submit a written application setting out how they consider they meet the criteria and that this should be explored further during an interview.

ANDREW DOCHERTY
CORPORATE DIRECTOR (GOVERNANCE)

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
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Dear

APPOINTMENT OF PARISH REPRESENTATIVES TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Chorley Council Standards Committee has consulted the local Parish Councils about the recruitment of additional Parish Council members for the Standards Committee. Your Parish Council has nominated you as a potential representative. I am very pleased that you have expressed an interest in the position.

I am enclosing application form, some additional information about the role and details of the criteria that will be used in the selection process.

If you are still interested I should be grateful if you would return the application form by [DATE]

Your application will then be considered and a shortlist of candidates for interview will be produced. You will be notified if you have been short listed and invited for interview. Interviews will be held [DATE] and will take place at the Town Hall, Market Street, Chorley.

The interview will take the traditional form of questions and answers. There will not be any other tests or activities.

I look forward to receiving your application.

Additional Information

Chorley Council Standards Committee acts as the Standards Committee to the Borough Council and the Parish Councils in the area. The Standards Committee (and its Sub Committees) can only consider business relating to Parishes if a Parish member is present. Recent changes to the role of the Standards Committee means that there is a need to add capacity and increase the number of Parish Members.

The Standards Committee's key role is to promote high standards of ethical conduct within the Councils for which it is responsible and in particular to promote compliance with the Code of Conduct. It does this in a number of ways. The Committee meets collectively roughly four times a year during the day and considers training and other development activity which is to take place, support the development of good practice tools and generally supports the work of the Monitoring Officer. The Committee also gives advice in relation to matters connected with ethics but which might not directly relate to the Code of Conduct. For example the Committee has recently been consulted on revisions to Chorley Council's Whistle blowing policy.

Members of the Standards Committee are also expected to receive training themselves and to support the training which is offered to Councillors. On average this may involve attendance at two or three sessions a year although other training opportunities may be available. Most training which is directed at Standards Committee Members specifically takes place both during the day but more general training is arranged for the evenings

In order to develop good relations between the Standards Committee and the Parishes each Member of the Standards Committee is allocated two to three Parish Councils to whom they act as a mentor. Parish members mentor Parishes other than their own. This role is one which Members have some flexibility to develop but essentially requires attendance at one meeting of the mentored Parish each year to give some basic information about developments with the Code and the Standards regime. The Monitoring Officer and his staff provide support in terms of the information to be offered.

The Committee also has a role in dealing with cases of alleged misconduct and this role has changed recently. The Committee now has to establish Sub Committees to consider and filter allegations made, to consider whether they require investigation or some other action, to deal with reviews of decisions not to refer for investigation and to consider cases which have been investigated. It is very difficult to predict the workload which this will generate but standards of conduct in Chorley have generally been good and few cases have been referred. In the last year before the new arrangements came into place six allegations were made against Chorley Borough and Parish Councillors of which two were referred for investigation and one resulted in a full hearing. Our experience so far both in training for the new arrangements and in practice suggests that the initial "filtering" decision can be made fairly quickly with meetings lasting less than an hour but hearings take substantially longer and Members need to expect to have to be able to give up at least a full day of their time. A key issue though is flexibility since "filtering" and "review" decisions need to be taken quickly and, while we understand that nobody can commit to being available at a drop of the hat, the role is unlikely to suit somebody

The role is a voluntary one and no allowances are paid but travel and subsistence expenses are payable.

PARISH REPRESENTATIVES ON THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Selection Criteria

The ideal candidate for the position of parish representative on the Standards Committee will:-

1. Be a member of a Parish/Town Council within the area of Chorley.
2. Be willing and able to advocate for and act as ambassador for the Standards Committee to Town and Parish Councils within the area
3. Have independence of mind, objectivity and impartiality.
4. Have the Ability to understand documents, identify and comprehend relevant facts, and follow evidence and arguments
5. Have a commitment to the general principles governing the conduct of Councillors generally and matters of probity and integrity in particular.
6. Have good interpersonal skills, including good communication skills and the ability to co-operate with others in a committee setting with tact and diplomacy in handling sensitive matters.
7. Be able to offer sufficient flexibility to attend meetings at short notice
8. Not have conflicts of interest which would seriously limit their ability to play a full role in the work of the Standards Committee
9. Be of good character with no issues which might bring them or the Standards Committee into disrepute
10. Show respect for people from different ethnic, cultural or social backgrounds -
11. Possess sound judgment, an ability to weigh arguments and reach a balanced decision
12. Be committed to their own personal development in the field of Standards
13. Have sufficient flexibility to give the commitment which the role of a Standards Committee Member requires.