

Meeting:	Standards Committee
Date:	21 September 2009
Subject:	Appointment of Independent Members of the Standards Committee
Responsible Officer:	Hugh Peart, Director of Legal and Governance Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor David Ashton, Leader of the Council
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

In accordance with statutory requirements, the Council on 31 May 2006 appointed four Independent Members of the Standards Committee for a term of office of four years. The Council is now required to make arrangements for the appointment of new Independent Members from May 2010.

Recommendations:

(1) To recommend to Council that four Independent Members be appointed to serve on the Standards Committee for 4 years from May 2010, and one reserve Independent Member be appointed to act only (a) in the event that any of the Independent Members resigns or is unable to continue before the expiry of their term of office and (b) as and when appointed by Council;

(2) to recommend to Council that a Selection Panel comprising 4 Members of Council (2 Conservative; 1 Labour; 1 Liberal Democrat) be established by the Standards Committee for the purposes of recruiting the Independent Members of the Standards Committee from May 2010, and that the proposed terms of reference of the Panel, as set out in paragraph 6, be agreed;

(3) that the membership and Chairman of the Panel be appointed, subject to the approval of (2) above by Council.

Section 2 – Report

Background

1. Section 53 of the Local Government Act 2000 requires every Council to establish a Standards Committee. The size and composition of the Standards Committee and the appointment of independent members is governed by The Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008. At least 25% of the members of a Standards Committee must be Independent Members, and the Chairman of the Standards Committee must always be an Independent Member.
2. The Regulations state that a person may not be appointed as an Independent Member of the standards committee unless the appointment is:
 - (a) approved by a majority of the members of the authority;
 - (b) advertised in one or more newspapers circulating in the area of the authority, and in such other publications or websites as the authority considers appropriate;
 - (c) of a person who has submitted an application to the authority.
 - (d) of a person who has not within the period of five years immediately preceding the date of the appointment been a member or officer of the authority; and
 - (e) of a person who is not a relative or close friend of a member or officer of the authority.
3. Standards for England (the new name for the Standards Board) recommends that Authorities should set a fixed term of office for Independent Members of Standards Committee of four years, and that Independent Members should serve no longer than two terms, however this is only a recommendation.
4. As in 2006, it is proposed that four Independent Members be appointed to serve on the Standards Committee for 4 years from May 2010 and that, in addition, one reserve Independent Member be appointed to act
 - (a) only in the event that one of the appointed Independent Members resigns or is unable to continue until the expiry of their term of office
 - and (b) as and when appointed by Council.

Process

5. The first step in the process is the appointment of a Member Selection Panel.
6. It is proposed that the Panel be established as a subsidiary body of the Standards Committee, comprising 4 Members of Council (2 Conservative; 1 Labour; 1 Liberal Democrat), and with the following Terms of Reference:

To agree the recruitment process for Independent Members of the Standards Committee from May 2010, including the placing of appropriate advertisements, and to carry out that process to select 4 Independent Members and one reserve Independent Member, for

recommendation to the Standards Committee and Council for appointment.

7. It is envisaged that, dependent on the number of applicants, the Selection Panel may only be required to meet on 3 occasions to carry out the following:
 - (i) agree a job description and person specification, information pack and shortlisting criteria; and agree the advert, where the advert should be placed and arrangements for the circulation of the advert to stakeholders;
 - (ii) carry out a shortlisting exercise from the applications received; and
 - (iii) interview shortlisted applicants with the Monitoring Officer or his representative and an HR advisor, prior to recommending appointment to the Standards Committee.
8. The Selection Panel's recommendations would then be reported to the Standards Committee on 23 March 2009, for onward recommendation to and adoption by Council at the beginning of the 2010/11 Municipal Year.
9. In order that the Selection Panel can hold its first meeting as early as possible, it is proposed that the membership be appointed by the Standards Committee at this meeting, subject to the approval of the arrangements for the selection process by the Standards Committee and Council on 29 October 2009. Nominations for the Selection Panel membership have therefore been sought from the Political Groups and the proposed membership will be advised to the meeting.

Financial Implications

10. The advertising costs of recruiting Independent Members will be contained within existing budgets.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:	Steve Tingle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	7 Sept 2009		
Name:	Jessica Farmer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date:	10 Sept 2009		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Claire Vincent, Senior Professional – Democratic Services, tel: 020 8424 1637, e-mail: claire.vincent@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: No unpublished documents.

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES / NO N/A
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES / NO N/A