

**COUNCIL MEETING
1 MARCH 2000**

**APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE
(Director of Corporate Services)**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on 17 November 1999, the Council established a Standards Committee comprising of four Councillors and two independent members. Officers were instructed to approach individuals who might be appropriate independent members of the Committee. This report proposes the appointment of three independent members to the Standards Committee, to provide adequate coverage in case of the unavoidable absence of one of the individuals.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That:

- i) **the Rev David Osborn and Mr David Briggs be appointed to serve on the Standards Committee until the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2002; and**
- ii) **Mr Jonty Driver be appointed to service on the Standards Committee until the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2001.**

3 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 3.1 The Council's decision to establish a Standards Committee was taken in advance of the legal requirement to do so that is included in the Local Government (Organisation and Standards) Bill. The proposed arrangements are in line with the Government's current proposals, although the Bill will, when enacted, empower the Secretary of State to make regulations as to the appointment of independent persons to Standards Committees and, therefore, a review of the appointments proposed in this report may be required as a consequence of any such regulations. Until the Bill is enacted, the independent members will have no voting rights. However, the proposals agreed by the Council on 17 November 1999 take account of this.

Borough Finance Officer

- 3.2 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Access Implications

- 3.3 None.

4 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Process

- 4.1 Following the Council's decision at its last meeting to establish a Standards Committee, the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services drew up a list of six possible independent members as the basis for informal discussions with the two Group Leaders. Following these discussions, it was agreed that the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services should meet with five of the individuals to outline the Council's plans and discuss whether they may wish to sit on the Standards Committee.
- 4.2 These meetings took place in December. Each of the five individuals was of a high calibre and could have contributed positively to the workings of the Standards Committee. However, following further discussions, officers recommended to the Group Leaders that three individuals should be approached and formally requested to serve on the Committee. This was agreed by both Leaders.
- 4.3 The individuals selected are:
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| The Rev David Osborn | Rector - Bracknell Team Ministry |
| Mr David Briggs JP | Manager Invention Facilities Development, Zeneca Group plc |
| Mr Jonty Driver | Master of Wellington College |
- 4.4 Each of these individuals has a particular interest and/or experience of ethical issues gained in a wide range of work and other contexts. The Rev Osborn's existing link with the Council, through his position of Mayor's Chaplain, will cease on 3 May 2000. This means he fulfils the criteria set by the Strategy and Policy Committee on 3 November 1999.
- 4.5 The appointment of three independent members rather than two, will help ensure that the Committee has the benefit of two independent members participating in each meeting. Rather than introduce substitute arrangements, officers will approach two for each meeting of the Standards Committee in rotation. However, in the immediate future, because the independent members will have no voting rights, it is suggested that all three individuals should be involved in the initial meetings which plan the Committee's work programme and establish its working procedures.

Term of Appointment

- 4.6 The Standards Committee is an important means of securing public confidence in the Council's processes and procedures. Given the nature of its remit, it is appropriate that the independent members should be appointed for a fixed term. In this respect, it is suggested that two years would normally be appropriate. However, Mr Driver is retiring away from the area in the near future. In this respect, it would be appropriate to make his appointment for a single year. This would give the added benefit of allowing the Council a rolling programme of replacing independent members each year.

Next Steps

- 4.7 It is suggested that all seven members of the Standards Committee meet in March to discuss informally the way in which the Committee's work plan will be compiled and to explore issues surrounding the working arrangements. Following this, officers can produce detailed reports for more formal consideration by the Committee. This will

include the procedures for undertaking any detailed investigations. Until this work is finished, it would not be appropriate to refer any detailed complaints or issues to the Committee and existing procedures will continue to apply.

Background Papers

None.

Contact for further information

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