



Report to: Council

Date of Meeting: 28 June 2007

Report from: Head of Legal & Democratic Services

Title of Report: Appointment of Replacement Parish Representative on the Standards Committee

Agenda Item Number: **11**

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this Report is to appoint a replacement Parish Representative on the Standards Committee following Mrs Gill Stephenson's decision not to seek re-election as a parish councillor for Great Lumley Parish Council at the recent May elections.
- 1.2 Members will no doubt recall that the Council adopted the advice of the Standards Board for England and changed the Constitution to have more than one parish council representative on the Standards Committee. Provision has been made in the Constitution to have two Parish Representatives (with Waldrige Parish Councillor, Mike Dulieu, being the only current serving Parish Representative).
- 1.3 All eleven Parish Councils were invited to submit nominations.
- 1.4 At the date of writing this Report three nominations for the one vacancy have been received and the Council is asked to appoint one of these persons nominated.

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Parish Councils have been consulted as indicated above.

3. CORPORATE PLAN AND PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The Standards Committee is fundamental to the ethical agenda and its functions relate to Members of the District Council and Members of all the Parish Councils in the District.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

4.1.1 The appointment of a replacement Parish Representative will not result in any increase in expenditure should that Member exercise their rights to claim an allowance under the Members Allowance Scheme.

4.1.2 The new Representative will however need to be supported in terms of training. Such training costs can be met from the existing budget.

4.2 Legal

4.2.1 The Council has a vacancy on the Standards Committee and this should be filled.

4.3 Personnel

4.3.1 Staff resources will need to be made available from the Legal & Democratic Services Team which is currently under pressure due to staff shortage. It is however anticipated that the extra demand can be absorbed.

4.4 Other Services

4.4.1 No direct implications.

4.5 Diversity

4.5.1 No direct implications.

4.6 Risk

4.6.1 The risk to the Community is that confidence in democracy will be eroded if there is a lack of efficiency, transparency and accountability. The appointment of a replacement Parish Representative will assist in building confidence.

4.6.2 In addition, the Parish Representative will be able to further promote the ethical agenda as part of the establishment.

4.7 Crime and Disorder

4.7.1 The promotion of high standards should further the Council's duty to prevent or reduce crime and disorder.

4.8 Other Implications

4.8.1 None

5. BACKGROUND, POSITION STATEMENT AND OPTION APPRAISAL

5.1 In terms of eligibility, a Parish Representative may not also be a Member of the responsible authority (i.e. the District Council) (see Regulation 3 (2) of The Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) Regulations 2001 SI 2812 as amended). Therefore, no dual hatted Members are eligible. There are no restrictions on candidates who were previously District Councillors.

5.2 With regard to length of office, Council received a report at its December 2006 in relation to the appointment Independent Representatives which resulted in agreeing a term of office of four years with the possibility of extension for a further four year period. The basis of this was to ensure independence and experience. The need for independence does not apply to Parish Representatives but Council may wish to consider fixing a set term of office for new Parish Representatives.

5.3 The Council has received three nominations at the date of writing this Report.

5.4 Great Lumley Parish Council has nominated Cllr Alan Bell.

5.5 Pelton Parish Council has nominated Cllr Isabel Smith.

5.6 Urpeth Parish Council has nominated Cllr Ian Clarkson.

5.5 The procedure for selection is not laid down nationally. It is therefore recommended that the previous procedure repeatedly used by the Council be adopted, namely lots be drawn by the Chair. This ensures independence.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 That the Chair be authorised to draw lots in order to choose between the nominated and eligible persons.

6.2 That the person so drawn first shall be appointed to serve as a Parish Representative on the Standards Committee until 31 March 2009.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS / DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO

7.1 None

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