

APPENDIX B

APPOINTMENT OF A PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

GUIDANCE NOTES

1. Background

- 1.1 Huntingdonshire District Council is seeking to recruit an additional Parish Council representative to serve on its Standards Committee.
- 1.2 Standards Committees under the previous government were regarded as a key feature of contemporary local government. Much has been written and reported about the changes in executive decision-making – in Huntingdonshire by a single party Cabinet – and the scrutiny arrangements which have been established to hold the Executive to account. But the standards of conduct which are expected of District, Town and Parish Councillors are also at the forefront of an ethical framework whose objective is to win and maintain confidence in those who are elected to public office.
- 1.3 Although the standards regime and the future of 'Standards for England' is currently under review by the new coalition government it is the expectation that some form of code of conduct would continue to be applied to members of local authorities.

2. What is the Role of the Standards Committee?

- 2.1 Currently all major Councils are required by law to establish a Standards Committee. The main role of the District Council's Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its 52 District Councillors and approximately 666 Town and Parish Councillors who represent some 73 local communities throughout Huntingdonshire.
- 2.2 Some of the specific responsibilities of the Standards Committee are to –
 - ◆ monitor Codes of Conduct for Councillors;
 - ◆ issue advice and commission training on the Codes;
 - ◆ consider applications for dispensations from the Codes where otherwise Councillors' interests would preclude them from speaking and/or voting on matters which come before their Councils for determination; and
 - ◆ respond as appropriate to alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct.

3. What is the Composition of the Standards Committee?

- 3.1 The District Council's Standards Committee currently comprises –
 - ◆ 7 elected District Councillors;
 - ◆ 3 representative of Town/Parish Councils in Huntingdonshire; and
 - ◆ 4 "Independent Members".

- 3.2 There is one vacancy for a Parish Council representative. Both Independent Members and Parish Council representatives are appointed for a four year term of office.

4. What is expected of a Parish Council Representative?

- 4.1 Parish Council representatives will be expected to attend quarterly meetings. Currently these are usually held on weekdays in the late afternoon at Pathfinder House, Huntingdon. Additional meetings may be convened as necessary according to the scheduling of urgent business which may need to be transacted at short (but rarely less than a week's) notice.
- 4.2 The ability to attend meetings is paramount as the Standards Committee cannot be quorate without there being at least one Parish Council representative present when there is parish business to consider.
- 4.3 This commitment has increased with the transfer of responsibility for dealing with complaints from Standards for England to local councils. This means that each complaint received has to be considered by a Sub-Committee which includes a Parish Councillor in its membership. Two other Sub-Committees are required to operate to deal with the complaints process and whilst these do not meet as frequently, Parish Council representation is required on each. All Sub-Committees tend to meet during the day and for not more than two hours (often less).

5. How will the District Council help me perform my duties if I am appointed as a Parish Council Representative?

- 5.1 The District Council will provide you with advice and support.
- 5.2 The District Council will pay for you to attend approved training courses.
- 5.3 The District Council will pay your reasonable travelling and subsistence costs in attending meetings and training events.

6. Still Interested?

- 6.1 If you wish to express an interest in the vacant position, please do so in writing to the Monitoring Officer in no more than 250 words by **20th September 2010** and return it to -

Colin Meadowcroft
Head of Law, Property and Governance & Monitoring Officer
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon PE29 3TN

- 6.2 Out of courtesy you might wish to seek the support of the Chairman of your Town or Parish Council before submitting your statement.
- 6.3 Your interest will be considered by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee, the Monitoring Officer and an existing Parish Council representative who will inform you of the outcome as soon as possible.
- 6.4 Thank you for your interest.