

<i>COMMITTEE</i>	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
<i>DATE</i>	TUESDAY, 18 MARCH 2003
<i>TITLE OF REPORT</i>	MEMBERSHIP OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE
<i>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</i>	Mark Bowen, assistant director, legal and contract services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider and make recommendations to Council on the level of independent and parish councillor representations of the Standards Committee

2 RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

- 2.1 The number of parish council representatives be increased from one to two members.
- 2.2 That a further independent member be recruited to the Standards Committee increasing the membership to four independent members.

3 DECISION ISSUES

- 3.1 The Constitution requires the Standards Committee to advise on best practice. It is for full Council to change the membership of any committee.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Medway's Standards Committee includes responsibility for the parishes within Medway's area. The Standards Committee can only consider parish matters when a member of the committee who is a representative of the parishes is present. Medway has one parish member. However, to ensure that parish business is not delayed, it was agreed that a second parish member be nominated as a substitute member. The practice is the substitute has attended all meetings to ensure continuity.
- 4.2 The Standards Board has recently given guidance on substitute members at Standards Committee meetings.
- 4.3 The substance of the advice is as follows:

"The Standards Board does not recommend the use of substitutes for Standards Committees. Standards Committees are not intended to operate along party political lines ... We recommend that authorities appoint more

than one independent member and where applicable more than one parish council representative. This will ensure that the committee is able to conduct its business even if one of the independent members or parish council representatives are unable to attend. If this recommendation is followed it should be possible for Standards Committees to carry out their business effectively without any need for substitutes.”

- 4.4 Therefore, it is recommended that the council increases the number of parish members to two to ensure compliance with best practice guidance from the Standards Board.
- 4.5 At present, Medway's Standards Committee has three independent members who also include the Chair and Vice Chair. When the Section 66 Regulations are introduced, it will allow local investigations to be undertaken and there is the potential for a considerably increased workload for independent members.
- 4.6 Whilst the Government has only recently laid an amendment to the Local Government Bill 2003 to deal with any deficiencies in the previous legislation to allow regulations to be brought in, recruitment and training of an additional Standards Committee independent member will take time. Therefore it is recommended that this process starts as quickly as possible.

5 LEGAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The legal implications are set out in the body of the report.
- 5.2 Independent and parish members of Standards Committees are not entitled to attendance allowance. However, they are entitled to claim travel and childcare allowances if appropriate to do so.