

**COUNCIL
12 SEPTEMBER 2019**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: MINOR AMENDMENT STANDARDS COMMITTEE CO-OPTEE NUMBERS AND APPOINTMENT OF PARISH/ TOWN REPRESENTATIVES TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR: LEGAL AND COMMUNITY/ MONITORING OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER/ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (CLLR JUDI BILLING AS CHAIRMAN OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE)

COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. For Full Council to agree an amendment to the Standards Committee membership (7.2.2), increasing the maximum non-voting co-optee numbers to four and thereafter to confirm the appointment of two further co-optees to the Standards Committee (bringing the current numbers to three).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Full Council:

- 2.1. agrees the amendment of 7.2.2 of the Constitution, to a maximum of four Parish Council co-optees as non-voting members of Standards Committee;

And, subject to that:

- 2.2. confirms the co-optee appointments of Cllr Dr Julie Magill MBE (Barkway Parish Council) and Cllr Amy Bourke-Waite (Royston Town Council) to the Standards Committee.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The increase in co-optee numbers will widen the engagement and further promote the ethical standards message in the District. This also ensures that there is Parish/ Town or Community Council in-put into the Standards Committee and Sub-Committees (as may be required).

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The applicants were considered appropriate co-optees for the role, and whilst there was only one (of two) vacancies at the time, the Panel considered that expanding the numbers and appointing additional co-optees would be an advantage, for the reasons outlined in the report.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Independent and Reserve Independent Person (IPs) and Chairman of the Standards Committee were on the Interview Panel with the Monitoring Officer and agree with the recommended increase in co-optee numbers and appointments.
- 5.2. The Leader of Council and Opposition Leader were notified of the recommendations and principle of potential increase in co-optee numbers in their July briefings and no concerns expressed regarding this approach.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The current Standards Committee membership includes two non-voting co-opted Parish Councillors to ensure that a Parish Council perspective is available to the Standards Committee and Sub-Committee (for any potential Standards Sub-Committee hearings that involve a Parish Councillor).
- 7.2. The Council has a vacancy due to the resignation of the previous post-holder from Great Ashby. It is desirable to have more than one co-optee, to prevent any potential conflict that may arise, in the event that there is a Parish complaint and that having to be dealt with by a co-optee from the same Council. Therefore, each time one co-optee resigns or loses office, under the exiting arrangements there is a requirement to undertake a recruitment exercise.
- 7.3. All Parish Councils within the District were therefore contacted on 12 June in order to promote the opportunity to be co-opted to the Standards Committee. Two applications were received and candidates interviewed on 16 July 2019 by a Panel, consisting of the IPs, Chairman of Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Change in membership (section 7.2.2):

- 8.1. The Standards Committee's terms of reference include, amongst other things, the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct and advice to Parish Councils. Increasing the co-option numbers will:
- assist with those objectives,
 - provide greater resilience in the event of relevant standards complaints,

- increase District-wide participation in ethical standards discussions and debates; and
- provide some flexibility/ resilience in the event that co-optees resign or lose office.

The potential increase to four (as opposed to three) provides more flexibility when having to recruit, and being able to take advantage of additional appointments should that be appropriate.

- 8.2. The proposed amendment (shown as tracked change below) would be:
"7.2.2: A maximum of ~~two~~ four Parish¹ Councillors co-opted as non-voting members".

Recommended appointments:

- 8.3. The applicants were considered against the criteria for the post (Appendix A) and deemed suitable for the role on the Standards Committee. Offer letters were sent (conditional on suitable character references and Full Council approval of changes to the co-optee numbers and appointments). As both received suitable character references, this was confirmed to the Panel and the proposals were set out to the Leader and Opposition leader in their July briefings.
- 8.4. The co-optees proposed are Cllr Dr Julie Magill MBE of Barkway Parish Council and Cllr Amy Bourke-Waite of Royston Town Council. The Panel considered that Councillors would provide a fresh and effective perspective for the Standards Committee. If appointed, these shall continue so long as they remain a Parish and Town Councillor respectively, or the co-optees resign from the Standards Committee – whichever is the earlier date.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Section 28(6) of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to have in place arrangements under which decisions on allegations against Councillors can be made. Section 102(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that Council may appoint such persons to a Committee or Sub-Committee for such term as may be determined by the appointing authority.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no basic or special allowances paid to Standards Committee co-optees and other than the potential for travel to and from a Standards Committee meeting (two scheduled per year), no significant capital or revenue implications for increasing the co-optee numbers.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Appropriate policy frameworks help to ensure that the authority has good governance arrangements in place. The adopted arrangements currently include two Parish Council co-optees on the Standards Committee. Increasing the numbers reduces the risk of conflict of interest and therefore ensures more effective safeguards to those arrangements.

¹ Parish also includes Town and Community Councillors

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. There are no direct implications from the appointment of Parish Councillor co-optees to the Standards Committee, other than providing a local community perspective.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no direct human resource implications relating to this matter.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1. Appendix A – Selection criteria.

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 16.1. Jeanette Thompson
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- 16.4. Kerry Shorrocks
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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1. Email and documents sent to Parish Councils on 12 June.