

## **Meeting of the Council - 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2008**

### **Report of the Director of Law and Property**

### **Appointment of Independent Member to the Standards Committee**

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. To consider the recommendation of the Interviewing Panel of the Standards Committee regarding the appointment of a third Independent Member of the Standards Committee.

#### **Background**

2. The Council is required to appoint a Standards Committee and at least 25% of its membership must be independent members. Currently the Standards Committee comprises six elected members (i.e. two members from each of the three political groups) and two independent members one of whom, the Bishop of Dudley, is the Chairman.
3. At its meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2007 the Council agreed that a third independent member should be appointed in view of the changing role of the Standards Committee. In May 2008 all complaints of alleged breaches of the Members Code of Conduct will initially be reported direct to a sub-committee of the Standards Committee rather than to the Standards Board for England. The sub-committee will then determine whether or not the complaint should be investigated and, if so, whether the investigation should be local or whether it is of sufficient seriousness to be referred to the Standards Board for England. If the decision is not to investigate, the complainant has a right of appeal to a differently constituted sub-committee. If there is a local investigation, a hearing will be convened before another sub-committee to consider the report of the investigating officer in the form of a hearing.
4. Regulations made by the Secretary of State require that each sub-committee be chaired by an independent member which reinforces the need to make a further appointment.
5. After a public advertisement in January 2008 seven applications to become the third independent member were submitted and each applicant was interviewed following which a shortlist of four applicants were interviewed by a Panel of the Standards Committee comprising:-

Lesley Smith (Independent Member)  
Councillor Pat Martin  
Councillor David Tyler

6. The Panel met on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008 and was impressed with the calibre of the applicants but unanimously decided to recommend to the Council that Mr John Beards be appointed for a four year term with effect from the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2008.
7. Mr Beards, who lives in Wolverhampton, has had a lengthy and varied career in the aviation industry, most recently working for Hong Kong Dragon Airlines as a Flight Operations Quality Assurance Manager.

### **Finance**

8. The post of Independent Member is unpaid but an independent member is entitled to receive travelling expenses.

### **Law**

9. The appointment of independent members to a Standards Committee is governed by Section 56 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008. At least 25% of the membership of the Standards Committee must be independent members and their appointment must be confirmed by full Council.

### **Equality Impact**

10. The process of recruiting and interviewing for the post of Independent Member has complied fully with the Council's policies on equality and diversity.

### **Recommendation**

11. It is recommended that the Council appoint Mr John Beards as an Independent Member of the Standards Committee for a term of four years with effect from the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2008.

*John Polychronakis*

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**John Polychronakis**  
**Director of Law and Property**

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### **Background Papers**

1. Guidance notes issued to candidates