

## BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>From: The Monitoring Officer</b>	<b>Report Number: M2</b>
<b>To: Council</b>	<b>Date of meeting: 24 April 2012 (BDC) 26 April 2012 (MSDC)</b>

### COMPOSITION OF THE BABERGH & MID SUFFOLK JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEE

#### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To extend the membership of the current Joint Standards Committee pending the implementation of changes to the standards regime due in the summer 2012.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Standards Committee continue in its current composition until the date upon which section 53 Local Government Act 2000 is repealed and that the term of appointment for the Council's own co-opted members be extended until that time.
- 2.2 That the review of allowances for the co-opted Members of the Joint Standards Committee be deferred pending introduction of new arrangements for ethical standards under the Localism Act 2011.

#### 3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Mid Suffolk currently has 4 co-opted members of the Joint Standards Committee who are each entitled to an allowance of £1,842 per annum. Babergh has 5 co-opted members of the Committee who are each entitled to an allowance of £730 per annum.
- 3.2 The cost of continuing with the current 9 co-opted members (rather than reducing to 8, as originally proposed) for another 2-3 months will cost no more than £500. This cost would be offset by the avoidance of time and cost in undertaking a selection exercise. Further, in deferring a review and alignment of allowances, no expenses are incurred with the Independent Remuneration Panel.

#### 4. Risk Management

- 4.1 None identified.

#### 5. Consultations

- 5.1 Political Leaders Group (BDC) and Portfolio Holders (MSDC) have been consulted. The Joint Standards Committee has also been apprised of the proposals.

#### 6. Equality Analysis

- 6.1 Not relevant to this report.

## **7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications**

- 7.1 This report recommends a continuation of the existing joint arrangements.

## **8. Key Information**

- 8.1 The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Standards Committee came into operation on 7 December 2011 comprising all 17 members of the Council's individual Standards Committees. It had been intended that the size of the Joint Committee would be reduced to 12 members (being 4 elected members, 4 parish representatives and 4 independent members) with effect from Annual Council in 2012. Further, that the remuneration for co-opted members (i.e. independent and parish council representatives) of the Joint Committee would be reviewed from that date to secure alignment. Those arrangements had been made by Full Council subject to any relevant changes to be introduced through the Localism Act 2011.
- 8.2 The Localism Act will require councils later this year to adopt new procedures for how standards of councillor conduct are addressed. A new Code of Conduct will be needed although there will not be a prescribed form as at present. A Countywide Code is being developed and, following feedback from Council Leaders, a Suffolk Standards Committee is being explored to determine those complaints that have been investigated and where there is a finding indicating breach of the Code. A further report on these matters will be made to Full Council in June 2012.
- 8.3 The DCLG has indicated that the start date will be 1 July 2012, but confirmation and publication of the Regulations is awaited.
- 8.4 Following the resignation of one independent member, there are currently 16 members of the Joint Standards Committee. There are 4 Babergh elected members, 3 Mid Suffolk elected members, 4 parish representatives and 5 independent members. In view of the pending changes, it is recommended that the Joint Standards Committee continues in its current composition rather than undertaking a selection process to reduce co-opted membership and incurring cost in engaging the Independent Remuneration Panel to review their allowances for what would only be a short period of time.

## **9. Appendices**

None.

## **10. Background Documents**

- 10.1 None.

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