

REQUEST FROM THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO RECONSIDER A DECISION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MADE ON 29TH MARCH 2010

Introductory Statement and Background

The Standards Committee, at its meeting on Friday 5 March 2010, under item SC35/09, resolved to make a recommendation to the Executive Committee (as set out in the Minutes of that meeting).

This came before the Executive Committee at its meeting on 29th March as Item 12 (reproduced in full, as an appendix, at the end of this paper)

The Executive Committee opted to maintain the procedure which was followed at the most recent selection process (which took place on 24th June 2009). Since receiving notification of the Executive Committee decision The Standards Committee has received the document 'Standards for England March 2010 review titled *Local Standards 2.0 – the proportionality upgrade* (hereafter referred to as the Report),

Although under the Council Constitution March 2003 (Part 4 Rules of Procedure, Rule 23 Rescission of Preceding Resolution by Council), decisions cannot generally be reconsidered within six months, the Standards Committee believes that this particular matter can be subject to earlier review since, when it made its decision on 29th March 2010, the Executive Committee was unaware of the contents of the Report.

The Standards Committee therefore requests the Executive Committee review its earlier decision and, in particular, in the light of the proposed strengthened role of the Independent Chair and Vice-Chair of Standards Committees, the part of the resolution of the Standard Committee (Executive Committee 29th March 2010, Item 12, Paragraph 6.1) which recommended the appointment of an Independent Member to the selection panel.

Reasons for the request for a review of the decision

1. The Report follows a nation-wide survey of Standards Committee functioning following the introduction of the new system in 2008/9 under which the role of the Standards Board (now Standards for England) changed to that of strategic regulator and passed to local authorities the responsibility for their own ethical arrangements to be promoted and safeguarded by local Standards Committees.

Concluding Statement

It is against the background of the Report, which has only very recently become available, that the Standards Committee requests that the Executive Committee reconsider its original recommendation, in particular that:

The Selection Panel for the appointment of an Independent Member on the Standards Committee shall comprise:

Group Leaders (or their representatives),
One Independent Member from the Standards Committee,
Chief Executive, and
Monitoring Officer.

Whilst the Standards Committee Independent Members are very grateful for the opportunity which they are being offered (to pass some time with the candidates informally at lunch with the opportunity to feedback their views to the Selection Panel before the final selection is made) (which they understand is the current proposal and position), the Standards Committee suggests that this could be misconstrued by the applicants for independent appointments to the Standards Committee and it could also send the wrong message to the general public .

The Standard Committee unanimously supports the presence of an Independent Standards Committee member on each Selection Panel thus demonstrating the importance of Independent Members and that there is no possible political bias in the selection procedure. Indeed it is worth noting that the Independent members of some Standards Committees are chosen by independent persons without any (party political) Members being involved.

The Standards Committee therefore requests a Review of the decision of the Executive Committee made on 29th March 2010.

Chair

Standards Committee

Dated

Appendix

Excerpt from the Agenda of the Executive Committee 29th March 2010)

5. ***Financial, Legal, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications***

5.1 *None specific.*

6. ***Recommendation***

6.1 *That the Selection Panel for the appointment of an Independent Member on the Standards Committee comprise:*

*Group Leaders (or representative)
One Independent Member from the Standards Committee
Chief Executive
Monitoring Officer*

6.2 *That as part of the interview process case scenarios be devised for candidates to discuss and explore..*

*Report prepared by: Anne Morgan, Solicitor to the Council
Elwyn Wilson, Democratic Services Manager.*

Background Papers

Report to Standards Committee 5 March 2010 – Appointment of Independent Member to the Council's Standards Committee