

MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE – ANNUAL REVIEW 2004/05**Standards Committee – 3 June 2005****Report of the Head of Corporate Services****Statutory Powers: Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003****Financial Implications: Nil****Purpose of the report**

1. The Standards Committee receives an annual update on the level of Members' attendance at official meetings of the Council so that it can monitor its performance indicators where Councillors should attend at least 50% of all meetings to which they are eligible.

Recommendation

That the Committee RESOLVES to note the report.

Background

2. At its meeting on 26 February 2001 the Committee recommended to Council that a minimum attendance requirement of 50% should be set (minute S.10/01 refers). Any Member whose attendance failed to meet this standard would be requested on a voluntary basis, to return a proportion of their Basic Allowance. This recommendation was agreed by the Council at its meeting on 10 May 2001 (minute 16/02 refers). This convention has been backed by the Councils' Independent Panel on Members' Allowances as one of good practice.
3. An analysis of the past year's attendance (1 April 2004 – 11 May 2005) has been undertaken which indicates that only one Member, Cllr Evans, has fallen below the requirement. It should be noted, however, that this was due to ill health. At its meeting on 16 December 2004, the Council approved Cllr Evans continued absence until such time as he was well enough to resume his duties (minute 70/04 refers). It is pleasing to report that the Member has now recommenced his duties.
4. Other interesting statistics include:-
 - (a) the constancy of the number of Members (5) again achieving 100% attendance rate;
 - (b) the lowest attendance rate now being 56% (notwithstanding the 21% rate recorded for Cllr Evans for the reasons recorded in paragraph 3 above);

- (c) the overall average attendance rate being high (85% or 86.7% if Cllr Evans unavoidable low attendance rate is excluded) when compared to other authorities;
 - (d) a large amount of interest being shown by Members who are not Members of a particular Council body but turn up to those meetings (either as an invitee or by their own request) so as to listen to the discussions and take part where appropriate. In fact, there are only 2 Members who have not taken advantage of this opportunity during the past year.
- 5. The above statistics show that an excellent average attendance rate is being maintained by Members.
 - 6. It has often been said that attendance at meetings forms only part of the role of a Member, although it is recognised to be a good barometer as to the level of work that Members do outside of Follaton House.
 - 7. There are two areas of attendance which are not included within the annual statistics but which effect Members' attendance, involvement and the performance of the Council:-
 - (a) Attendance at the outside bodies. There is no way for the Council to check Members' attendance at the 58 organisations on which it is represented. Members are reminded though of the Council decision (minutes 12 and 27/03 refers) which asked that Members produce regular reports on issues which have been raised at meetings of the outside bodies. To date, only a small number of reports have been produced. The Council has attempted to improve the community role of the Member by targeting representation on only outside bodies which in some way or another align with the Council corporate priorities. It has also recognised the importance of the community role via attendance at parish council meetings by the introduction of paying travelling expenses for Members attending meetings of parish councils of which they are not a member.
 - (b) Attendance at training events. It is disappointing to note that attendance levels at training events remains low. This is an area that will continue therefore to be monitored.

Conclusion

- 8. The statistics again demonstrate the degree of commitment and dedication shown by Members in attending formal meetings of the Council and its bodies.
- 9. Clearly with a greater focus on improving attendance at training events etc, the role, experience and abilities of Members can continue to be developed.

Mary Whyte
Senior Member Support Officer

Standards Committee
3 June 2005

K.Williams
Head of Corporate Services