

MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE – ANNUAL REVIEW 2006 / 2007**Standards Committee – 24 October 2007****Report of the Head of Corporate Services**

Statutory Powers: Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003

Financial Implications: Nil

Purpose:

1. The Standards Committee receives an annual update on the level of Members' attendance at public meetings of the Council so that it can monitor its performance target that councillors should attend at least 50% of all meetings of the bodies to which they have been appointed.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee RESOLVES to note the report.

Background

2. At its meeting on 26 February 2001, the Standards Committee recommended to Council that a minimum attendance requirement of 50% should be set for meetings of the Council and its various bodies (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 16/01 refers). This convention has been backed by the Councils' Independent Panel on Members' Allowances as one of good practice.
3. A schedule of all councillors' attendance from the Annual Council meeting on 10 May 2006 to 30 April 2007 is shown at the attached Appendix A.
4. Statistics of particular interest include:-
 - (a) the constancy of the number of Members (4) achieving 100% attendance rate;
 - (b) 33% of Members achieving an attendance rate of 90% or more;
 - (c) 70% of Members achieving an attendance rate of 80% or more;
 - (d) the lowest attendance rate now being 63% and therefore well above the minimum requirement of 50% as set by the Committee;
 - (e) the overall average attendance rate being 84%.

5. In addition, it should be highlighted that a large amount of interest was shown by Members who were not Members of a particular Council body but turned 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.
6. It should be noted that attendance at meetings forms only one part of the role of a councillor and does not reflect the level of work done within their respective wards or in representing the Council on other bodies. It should also be noted that Members come from different backgrounds and some, particularly those in full time employment or with carer responsibilities, may find attendance at meetings more of a challenge. It should not, therefore, be regarded as a barometer of a councillor's effectiveness as an elected representative.
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. The Council does not check Members' attendance at the 50 outside bodies on which it is represented. Members are reminded though of the Council decision (minutes 12/03 and 27/03 refer) which asked that they produce regular reports on issues which have been raised at meetings of the outside bodies. The Council has attempted to improve the community role of the Member by targeting representation on only those outside bodies which in some way or another align with the Council's corporate priorities.
 - (b) Attendance at training events. This is an area that will continue to be monitored particularly now that a Member's eligibility to sit on the Council's regulatory committees, Development Control and Licensing, is dependent on them achieving a minimum 80% attendance rate at related training events.

Risk Assessment

Risk	Mitigation
Poor attendance at meetings may impact on the reputation of individual councillors and the Council as a whole.	Attendance levels are monitored and reported annually.

Conclusion

8. Despite the limitations of the statistics, they do again demonstrate the degree of commitment and dedication shown by Members in attending formal meetings of the Council and its bodies, particularly when bearing in mind that this municipal year preceded the District Council Elections. Clearly with a greater focus on attendance at training events etc, the role, experience and abilities of Members can continue to be developed.

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Standards Committee
24 October 2007

Kevin Williams
Head of Corporate Services

Background Papers:
None