

TERMS OF REFERENCE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Number of Members : **3 West Somerset District Councillors**
 3 Independent members
 3 Parish/Town Councillors

Number of Meetings: **As and when necessary**

Open to the Press and Public: **Yes**

Quorum: 3 (must include one independent and one parish/town council representative)

Note: Any reference to Authorities in the Terms Of Reference for the Standards Committee refers to West Somerset District Council and any councils for which it is the responsible authority by virtue of the Local Government Act 2000 (namely parish and town councils) - Refer to Section 54 of the Local Government Act 2000.

Purpose

To be a champion of ethical conduct through being a regulatory body and being responsible for helping and supporting Members and raising standards. This will be achieved by undertaking detailed work regarding ethical management matters and issues of probity relating to Members of local authorities in West Somerset. The Committee's general functions will be to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the Members and co-opted Members of these local authorities and to assist members of the authorities to observe their codes of conduct. More specifically:

1. To advise authorities on the adoption or revision of the codes of conduct and make appropriate recommendations.
2. To monitor the operation of codes of conduct.
3. To advise and train Members and co-opted Members of the authorities and/or enable advice and training to be given on matters relating to authorities' codes of practice.
4. To provide guidance on ethical matters or probity issues as requested by the Council, Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer, or Town or Parish Council.
5. To receive allegations that the code of conduct has been breached and decide whether any action needs to be taken.
6. As appropriate, undertake action/investigations as a result of the initial consideration of allegations and as requested/required by the Standards Board.
7. To consider applications from Councillors for dispensations from the requirements relating to declarations of interest under the code of conduct and in accordance with the dispensation regulations.
8. To, when requested by a Council or the Standards Committee, assist by mutual agreement on any matter which would benefit from the involvement of the Committee.

Note: membership information

Parish Town Council Representatives.

- a) There will be three representatives from town/parish councils
- b) 'Elections' for the parish/town representatives will be organised by Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) in line with the District Council elections.
- c) Parish/town representatives will be elected to serve for a period of four years or until the next District Council elections and can re-apply to stand for election for a further four years, but may not serve for more than eight consecutive years.
- d) Parish/town council representatives must meet any criteria set out in the Local Government Act 2000 and its associated Statutory Instruments and Regulations and must also meet the following criteria:
 - Must be serving parish/town councillors
 - Must have served for at least two years as a parish/town councillor
 - Must not be a Councillor or Officer of West Somerset District Council

Independent Members

- a) Six months before the expiry of the term of office of each independent member an appointment process is undertaken in accordance with the legislation in force at that time.
- b) Independent members will be appointed to serve for a period of four years and may re-apply to serve for a further four year period but may not serve for more than eight consecutive years.

General

Any member of the Standards Committee who is found guilty of a criminal offence involving dishonesty or that would bring disrepute upon the Committee or Council will have their appointment rescinded.

Note: membership information

No more than one member of the Cabinet shall be a member of the Standards Committee and this may not include the Leader.

The District Council be requested to provide a degree of continuity when appointing its representative to reflect the length of service afforded to parish/town and independent members of the Committee.

The Committee may not be chaired by a member of the Cabinet and it is recommended by the Standards Board that the Committee should be chaired by an Independent member.