



**AGENDA ITEM: 8**

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE:  
1 November 2006**

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**Report of: Council Secretary and Solicitor**

**Contact for further information: Mrs G L Rowe (Ext 5004) and  
Mrs J Denning (Ext 5384)**

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**SUBJECT: VISITS – PARISH AND DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETINGS**

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District wide interest

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 For Members to consider a way forward with regard to visits to meetings of Parish and District Council Meetings.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That the proposals set out at Paragraph 5 be agreed.

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**3.0 BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Committee have previously resolved that as part of being proactive in relation to ethical matters, Members of the Standards Committee be invited to observe conduct at Council, Cabinet, Committee and Parish Council meetings.

3.2 Such visits would raise the profile of the Standards Committee and enable Members to report back on their findings.

**4.0 CURRENT POSITION AND ISSUES**

4.1 District Council Meetings

4.1.1 The timetable for District Council Meetings is fixed and is attached for Members at appendix 1.

#### 4.2 Parish Council Meetings

There are 19 Parish Councils in the West Lancashire District and a Parish Meeting, see appendix 2.

### **5.0 PROPOSALS**

5.1 In relation to visits to District Council meetings it is proposed that these should be undertaken by the independent and Parish Members as District Councillors are already familiar with the workings of Council meetings.

5.2 The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee could start these visits off by attending Council on Wednesday, 13 December 2006. Two members could then attending Planning committee on 15 February 2007, two members could attend the Internal Review Committee on 6 March 2007 and then two members could attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 April 2007. It would not be necessary for members to observe the whole of the meeting, it would be for them to judge how long to stay. The Assistant Member Services Manager would liaise to organise these visits.

5.3 It is suggested that over the next 12 to 18 months a programme of visits to Parish Councils is also arranged. Two members of the Standards Committee should visit a Parish Council together. As we have 11 members this would mean approximately 4 visits per member over that period.

5.4 The Assistant Member Services Manager will prepare a programme by liaising with the Parish Clerks and then establish the availability of Standards Committee members. Due to the resourcing implications it would not be practicable for members to be accompanied by officers.

5.5 The visiting members will be asked to give feedback on their observation of the relevant meeting at the following meeting of the Standards Committee.

### **6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

6.1 These matters relate to the promotion of high ethical standards at a local level.

### **7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There will be some financial and resource implications arising from this report with regard to arranging and conducting visits, these will be met from existing resources.

## **8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 In terms of the likely benefits that the activities may provide compared to the time and resources spent in their undertaking. On balance, it is considered of practical benefit for members to gain first hand experience of Members conduct at both District and Parish level, as well as gain an insight into different approaches within each of the authorities visited.

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### **Background Documents**

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

There is no evidence from an initial assessment of an adverse impact on equality in relation to the equality target groups.

### **Appendices**

1. Timetable of District Council Meetings 2006/2007
2. List of Parish Councils in West Lancashire District