

REVIEW OF THE LIST OF OUTSIDE BODIES

Submitted by: Head of Business Improvement, Central Services & Partnerships
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Portfolio: Finance & Resources

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To set out the review of the Council's 'List of Outside Bodies', as agreed at the Council's Annual Meeting on 4th June 2014. The report includes a working definition for an 'Outside Body' as well as criteria for the Council to nominate Members to be a part of these outside bodies. Based on the criteria established in this report of the existing 'List of Outside Bodies', a number of changes have been made to the existing List of Outside Bodies and these are to be found at Appendix A.

RECOMMENDATION:

Council is asked to consider the contents of the report and approve the changes proposed to the 'List of Outside Bodies' (found at Appendix A).

Council is asked to agree that no additional bodies should be added to the list unless they meet the criteria set out in this report.

Council is also asked to note the issues raised in the report, especially in relation to those outside bodies identified in the report.

Reasons

The existing 'List of Outside Bodies' includes around 80 such organisations on which Members are currently nominated to represent the Council. In order to ensure that resources are used efficiently, a review has been carried out and the list amended accordingly.

Background

At the Full Council meeting on 4 June 2014 it was agreed that the 'List of Outside Bodies' document (presented at Annual Council each year) should be reviewed, with nominations frozen until this had been undertaken.

Any councillor serving on an Outside Body, therefore, would also remain in post during this review period.

The reasons for this review were:

- To explore the sustainability of nominating elected members to serve on various outside bodies. The existing list now totals around 80 community groups, third sector institutions plus local, regional and national organisations. This represents a large amount of resources for a council of this size to commit.
- To determine a process for adding and removing Outside Bodies to and from the list.
- To reduce the amount of administrative time taken in managing the nominations annually.

- To review the financial implications of NULBC Members attending Outside Body meetings, as – currently – Members can claim mileage and subsistence as part of their role in attending these meetings. In addition, the Council – in some cases – pays subscriptions to certain organisations and is also involved in the financial management processes of some Outside Bodies (with potential implications in relation to liability and other related financial matters)
- To review the existing governance arrangements around existing Outside Bodies to establish whether they are fit for purpose and align with the Borough Council’s stated desire to be an organisation which is “open and transparent” in its decision making
- To ensure that nominees are the relevant representatives for that Outside Body in terms of location or role.
- To ensure that the Council is informed on a regular basis of the work of each Outside Body listed – this would usually be in the form of a report from the Member representing the Council either annually or regularly as circumstances demand

Process

Following the Council’s agreement to review the ‘List of Outside Bodies’ (see above), the List itself has been examined in terms of any required changes and/or removals based on the above criteria.

As part of this work, it was suggested that a ‘definition’ of what constitutes an Outside Body may ensure that, going forward, only groups that conformed to this definition could be included on the nomination list.

It is therefore suggested that an ‘Outside Body’ for the purposes of this exercise be defined as:

One where there is a pecuniary or physical asset of the Borough Council being managed by the Outside Body which requires either oversight or input from the Borough Council and/or where the Borough Council benefits – either directly or indirectly - from local/ regional/national representation through being part of an appropriate organisation/association designed to provide representative or advocacy services to or on behalf of the Borough Council, or where the Borough Council may be in a position to learn from others in terms of its own development

All Outside Bodies were researched to ascertain whether they met with this definition. In addition background information on the organisation itself was obtained, along with details of how appointments had been made historically.

Findings

Community Groups

Community Centres

In the relevant Cabinet report (January 2014) it was agreed that “Ward members automatically become the Council’s nominated representatives for community centres situated within their wards for the period of their office, negating the need to make specific nominations each year.” The only exception to this is Bradwell Lodge which is a company limited by guarantee, where their constitution only permits one councillor to sit on the board.

Residents Associations

Many of these groups are financed and/or supported by other organisations e.g. Aspire Housing. The membership is open to all residents in a particular area, which automatically includes councillors.

Friends Groups

The nomination list shows that, although the Council may nominate to these organisations, it does not have automatic right of representation and it is at each organisation's discretion whether to appoint a Councillor nominated in this way. These groups operate in a similar way to Residents' Associations, and membership is open to all interested members of that particular community.

Third Sector

With the introduction of the Borough Council's Third Sector Commissioning Framework there is now a clear process in place for monitoring funding of a number of third sector organisations (e.g. Arch)

Many of the charities on the list are a legacy from Mayoral involvement spanning back over a period of years and should therefore be removed as they do not conform to the definition of an Outside Body as set out in section 2 of this report and also come under the 'reasons for review' as set out in section 1.

There are some specific Third Sector organisations which can remain on the list (e.g. VAST) as they conform to the definition of Outside Bodies as set out in this report

Local, Regional and National Organisations

The majority of these appointments relate to specific roles within the council such as the Leader or a Portfolio Holder – examples include the Local Government Association and the District Councils Network

Locality Action Partnerships - The LAP constitutions state that membership is open to "*Any County or District Councillor representing any part of the area*" - this negates the need to make specific nominations annually.