

Wednesday, 19 March 2025

**Report of the Monitoring Officer**

**Recruitment of Independent Persons**

**Exempt Information**

None

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to seek the Audit & Governance Committee's approval for the advertisement and specification for the recruitment of an Independent Person (IP), as required under the Localism Act 2011.

**Recommendations**

1. Approve the advertisement for the Independent Person position **Appendix 1**
2. Approve the Person Spec and Independent Person Responsibilities as detailed **Appendix 1**
3. Approve the appointment period recommendation of two years, with the option to extend for a further one year, delegated to the Monitoring Officer and Chief Executive.
4. Delegate to the Monitoring Officer and Chief Executive the responsibility to commence the recruitment process and short listing of candidates.
5. Delegate to the Monitoring Officer and Chief Executive, in conjunction with 3 members of Audit & Governance Committee the responsibility for interviewing of candidates for onward recommendation to Full Council appointment.

**Executive Summary**

The Localism Act 2011 requires all local authorities to appoint at least one Independent Person. This individual's views must be sought and considered by the authority before making a decision on an allegation that is under investigation. The Independent Person's role ensures public trust in the council's ethical standards.

A person may not be recommended for appointment under the Act unless:

- i. the vacancy has been advertised in such manner as the authority considers is likely to bring it to the attention of the public and
- ii. the person has submitted an application to fill the vacancy

The main role of an Independent Person is to be available to be consulted on complaints against councillors and ethical governance issues. They provide an independent viewpoint, looking at issues from the point of view of an ordinary member of the public.

The Independent Person works closely with the Monitoring Officer considering whether complaints against councillors meet the criteria for investigation. They may be consulted before a decision is made and on the outcomes of any investigated complaint. Additionally, the IP may be consulted on other standards matters, including by the member who is subject to an allegation.

The Committee for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) report on Ethical Standards in January 2019 recommended as good practice that each authority has two Independent Persons.

Aligned to this best practice recommendation, it is therefore, recommended that two Independent Persons be appointed where possible.

It is proposed the Independent Persons will each be paid an annual allowance of £1000 (gross) and this can be met from within existing budget.

**Recruitment Process**

To ensure a fair and transparent recruitment process, it is proposed that the following steps are undertaken:

- Advertisement of the position in such manner that is likely to bring it to the attention of the public. (This may include all social media platforms and newspaper advertisement)
- Shortlisting of candidates based on the agreed specification.
- Interviews conducted by the Monitoring Officer, Chief Executive, & 3 members of Audit & Governance committee, with onward recommendations for a Full Council appointment

It is proposed that a recruitment exercise be facilitated on the indicative timescale

Advertisement (local press, social media, TBC website and other relevant job sites)	1 April 2025
Shortlisting	Last week in May
Interviews with the Monitoring Officer, Chief Executive & 3 members of Audit & Governance Committee	1 <sup>st</sup> week June 2025
Full Council Recommendation	8 July 2025

**Advertisement**

The proposed advertisement for the position, included person specification and role is available at Appendix 1

**Options Considered**

No alternatives were considered due to the legal requirement under the Localism Act 2011 for Council to appoint an Independent Person.

**Resource Implications**

There are no financial implications as a result of this report. The cost of the allowances can be met from within existing budgets. There will be some administrative resource implications from the future appointment of any IP with the processing of allowances.

**Legal/Risk Implications Background**

The Localism Act 2011 requires all local authorities to appoint at least one Independent Person to advise on ethical matters of councillor conduct, and that the Independent Persons must be appointed through a process of public advertisement, application and competitive appointment by a positive vote of the majority of all members of the Authority.

**Equalities Implications**

An EQSHIA is available at Appendix 2

**Report Author**

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**Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Advertisement (including person spec and role)

Appendix 2 - EQSHIA