

Report of the Monitoring Officer

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON1. Purpose of report

To enable the Council to appoint two additional Independent Persons for a term of four years.

2. Detail

Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 and our arrangements for dealing with Member Code of Conduct complaints require an Independent Persons views to be sought by the Monitoring Officer before making a decision on a Member Code of Conduct allegation.

The best practice recommendations report published in January 2019 by the Committee on Standards in Public Life recommends that local authorities should have access to at least two Independent Persons.

An Independent Person should be appointed for a term of no more than four years.

The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, also requires at least two Independent Persons to be consulted and to sit on the disciplinary Panel when dealing with Statutory Officers disciplinary or dismissal processes.

The Council has been operating with one Independent Person since 2013. Recruiting two new Independent Persons will ensure the Council is following best practice recommendations, is able to call on two Independent Persons should the need arise and will provide more resilience should a conflict or sickness issue arise.

In accordance with the requirements set out in the Localism Act 2011, a public recruitment exercise has taken place in October and November 2021, further details are provided in the attached Appendix.

3. Financial implications

Although the role of the Independent Person is voluntary, an allowance of £1,342 per annum will be paid (per role) to cover any expenses incurred whilst carrying out the role. There are sufficient budget provisions to accommodate the proposed roles.

Recommendation

The Council is asked to RESOLVE that David Halstead and Clare Jordan be appointed to serve as Independent Persons from 12 January 2022 for the term of four years and the current Independent Person, Lynda Ogilvie to remain in post until 31 March 2022.

Background papers

Nil.

APPENDIXFurther information

The recruitment exercise attracted six well qualified applicants, with five candidates being shortlisted (one was excluded due to a conflict and therefore was not shortlisted). All were invited to attend a panel interview, the panel consisted of the Monitoring Officer, Head of Governance and Head of Legal Services.

The panel found two candidates particularly suitable for the role, due to their extensive local government backgrounds and specific understanding of the role. The recommendation to Council is to appoint Mr David Halstead and Ms Clare Jordan to serve as the Council's Independent Persons from 12 January 2022.

A four-year term of office is recommended to provide stability of tenure and necessary resilience.

It is proposed that the Council's current Independent Person Ms Lynda Ogilvie remain in post until the 31 March 2022, so the new postholders can be adequately trained and to handover any ongoing matters.