

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Standards Committee – 17 October 2024
SUBJECT:	Recruitment of Independent Persons
LEAD OFFICER:	Daniel Bainbridge, Group Head of Law & Governance
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor David Huntley
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION: The Standards Committee is responsible for maintaining high governance standards within the council pursuant to its duties under the Localism Act 2011. The committee has the role of ensuring that the ethical standards regime forming part of the governance framework of the council is robust, thereby engendering public confidence that the council can deliver upon its priorities.	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT: The Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer functions sit within the Chief Executive's directorate.	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY: There are no financial implications associated with this report.	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on the Council's recruitment process in respect of Independent Persons and for Committee to recommend the appointment of three Independent Persons (IPs), following a recruitment process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to recommend to Full Council that Alan Ladley, John Cooke and John Thompson be appointed as Independent Persons for the period of 4 years from 7 November 2024.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1 The Standards Committee's functions include considering membership and recruitment of Independent Persons and making recommendations for appointments to Full Council.
- 3.2 Independent Persons are appointed for a fixed period of time, and all three of the Council's Independent Persons terms of appointment are due to expire on 6 November 2024. A recruitment process was agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 18 January 2024 and the terms of office of the three current Independent Persons was extended to 6 November 2024 to allow for this process to be completed (as agreed at the Full Council on 17 July 2024).

4. DETAIL

- 4.1 An advert and information pack were approved by the Standards Committee at its meeting on 18 January 2024 and the advert was published on the Council's website on 29 August 2024.
- 4.2 The advert was also promoted via the council's Business Partnership newsletter and also posted on the Forces Employment Charity and Forces Families Job websites, following a suggestion from a Committee Member that this kind of role would be of interest to veterans.
- 4.3 The closing date for applications was Friday 13 September 2024 and we received a total of four applications.
- 4.4 The Monitoring Officer and the Chair of Standards Committee undertook a shortlisting exercise and three applicants were invited to interview.
- 4.5 An interview panel was convened and interviews took place on Friday 4 October 2024. The interview panel consisted of:
- Councillor David Huntley, Chair of the Standards Committee
 - Councillor Maralyn May, Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee
 - Councillor Mark Turner, Member of the Standards Committee
 - Sandra Prail, Independent Person
 - Daniel Bainbridge, Group Head of Law & Governance
- 4.6 Having interviewed all three candidates and assessed each against the criteria previously agreed by the Committee, the interview panel agreed the recommend to the Committee the appointment all three interviewed applicants:
- Alan Ladley
 - John Cooke
 - John Thompson.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 No additional consultation is required following the decision of the interviewing panel.

6. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Having no Independent Persons is not an option.

7. COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE/SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications. Any expenditure in relation to the recruitment process is met from existing budget. The allowance paid to Independent Persons is covered within the Members Allowances Scheme in Part 9 of the council's constitution.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Appointing Independent Persons supports the Council's governance arrangements and aids the mitigation of risk through the maintenance of strong standards of conduct within the authority.

9. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

- 9.1 Councils are statutorily obliged to appoint at least one Independent Person (IP). IPs' views are to be sought and taken into account by the Monitoring Officer and/or Standards Committee when a decision is taken on an allegation under the Members' Code of Conduct. Their views may also be sought by the Monitoring Officer and/or Standards Committee at any other stage in the procedure when a complaint of a breach of the code is considered, or by the councillor facing the allegation. The Monitoring Officer routinely consults with the IP at the assessment stage of any complaint.
- 9.2 The council's constitution requires the Council to have a minimum of three Independent Persons appointed at any one time. The Standards Committee is responsible for considering membership and recruitment of Independent Persons to the Committee and making recommendations for appointments to Full Council.
- 9.3 IPs cannot be employees of the Council, or councillors, and are invited to attend meetings of the Standards Committee in an advisory, non-voting capacity.
- 9.4 Section 27 Localism Act 2011 provides that an authority must promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and co-opted members of the authority.
- 9.5 Section 28 Localism Act 2011 requires that the Council appoints an Independent Person and the steps that must be undertaken in the process.
- 9.6 Section 28(8)(c)(iii) Localism Act 2011 provides that an Independent Person's appointment must be approved by a majority of Members at Full Council.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 10.1 There are no human resources implications.

11. HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

- 11.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

12. PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

12.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

13.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

14. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

14.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

15. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

15.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

16. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

16.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

17. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

17.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

CONTACT OFFICER:

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None