

# **ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **REPORT TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE ON 31 JANUARY 2019**

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Recruitment of Additional Independent Persons to the Standards Committee</b>
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<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	Liz Fitcher – Group Head of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer
<b>DATE:</b>	9 January 2019
<b>EXTN:</b>	01903 737610

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

As requested by the Committee at its last meeting on 21 June 2018, this report seeks further views from Members on the approach to recruiting additional Independent Persons and presents options for a way forward.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

If the Committee wish to pursue the appointment of further Independent Members, it is recommended that:

- (1) the option for recruiting additional Independent Person(s) to the Standards Committee, as set out in the report, be endorsed with authority being given to the Group Head of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, to agree the application pack and advertisement; and
- (2) two Members of the Committee and an Independent Person, as confirmed at the meeting, be appointed to sit on the Interview Panel.

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to appoint at least one Independent Person to its Standards Committee. The Committee considered a report at its last meeting on 21 June 2018 which sought support to extending the appointment of the existing two Independent Persons, Brian Green and John Thompson, for a further five year term. The recommendation of the Committee to confirm this extension was subsequently agreed by Full Council on 18 July 2018.
- 1.2 At the time, the Committee also discussed whether having two independent persons was sufficient and whether further appointments should be pursued. It was agreed that a recruitment process be commenced when possible and a further report be made to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 1.3 It has not been possible to commence a recruitment process before now, mainly due to the increase in workload for the Monitoring Officer from a significant number of complex complaints being made against Councillors under the Code of Conduct between July to November 2018. The consequential workload has provided an opportunity to test out all

stages of the Local Assessment Procedure and has involved the Independent Persons in the majority of the complaints. The work has been distributed as evenly as possible between the two Independent Persons and both have been able to respond in a timely manner to the Monitoring Officer. The support of the Independent Persons in all the investigations undertaken has been extremely valuable.

- 1.4 The two Independent Persons, Brian Green and John Thompson, have been consulted on whether they feel that the workload from the recent cases has been too onerous and whether they have any views on the appointment of additional Independent Persons. Both will provide their views at the meeting.
- 1.5 The Monitoring Officer's view is that the current arrangements with the Independent Persons are working well under the Local Assessment Procedure and if the Committee still support the recruitment of additional Independent Persons then they have been presented with a proposed way forward.

## **2.0 PROPOSALS**

- 2.1 If a recruitment exercise is to be pursued, then it is proposed that a similar approach is undertaken to that adopted by the Audit & Governance Committee in July 2018 in appointing new members to the Independent Remuneration Panel which conducts reviews of the Members Allowances Scheme. They successfully appointed new members to this Panel through advertising in the business community and on the Council's website.
- 2.2 The first stage of this approach would be to:
  - a) place an advert in the Council's e-newsletter (organised by Economic and Cultural Development) which is circulated to around 3,500 businesses on a monthly basis;
  - b) post the advert onto the Business Partnership webpages; and
  - c) post the advert on the Job Vacancies page of the Council's website
- 2.3 This would be on a no cost basis. The posting of the advert would be accompanied by a news release promoting the advert on the Council's website thereby bringing it to the attention of the public as is required by the Localism Act 2011.
- 2.4 Should this approach be unsuccessful then the second stage would be for an advert to be placed in the local media – Bognor Regis Observer, Littlehampton Gazette and West Sussex Gazette. This option is not being recommended at the initial stage due to the costs involved and the success that the Audit & Governance Committee had from the no-cost options.
- 2.5 The advert would include an information pack explaining more about the role and this would be developed in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee and seek the views of the existing Independent Persons.
- 2.6 The Committee may wish to consider at this stage whether it wishes to appoint one or more Independent Persons so this can be clarified in the advert.

2.7 In terms of selecting a candidate(s), it is suggested that an interview panel is established comprising two members of the Committee, an existing Independent Person (all to be confirmed at this meeting) and the Group of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer. Any recommendation for appointment of additional Independent Persons would need to be made by the Committee to Full Council in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

### 3.0 OPTIONS:

1. To pursue the appointment of additional Independent Persons and endorse the approach proposed for the recruitment exercise; or
2. To not take any further action based on the existing two Independent Persons being sufficient to cover the workload of this role.

### 4.0 CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		✓
Relevant District Ward Councillors		✓
Other groups/persons (please specify) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brian Green and John Thompson, Independent Persons</li> </ul>	✓	
<b>5.0 ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail below)</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Financial		✓
Legal	✓	
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		✓
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		✓
Sustainability		✓
Asset Management/Property/Land		✓
Technology		✓
Other (please explain)		✓

### 6.0 IMPLICATIONS:

None as the Council has already appointed two Independent Persons in accordance with the requirements of Section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011.

### 7.0 REASON FOR THE DECISION:

To take forward the request of the Committee to recruit additional Independent Persons.

### 8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Localism Act 2011, section 28

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/section/28/enacted>

Report and Minutes to Standards Committee on 21 June 2018

<https://www.arun.gov.uk/standards-committee>

