



Council

Thursday, 17 July 2025

Appointment of Independent Persons

Report of the Monitoring Officer

Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Governance, Councillor D Viridi

1. Purpose of report

This report recommends the continued appointment of Mr Christopher Richards and Ms Helen Richardson as the Council's Independent Persons for standards matters as required by the Localism Act 2011 (the Act).

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED the Council extends the appointment of Mr Christopher Richards and Ms Helen Richardson as its Independent Persons for standards matters under section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 for a period of two years, with authority for the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee, to extend the appointment up to an additional two years.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

The Council is required pursuant to Section 28 ((7) of the Act to have access to at least one Independent Person to consult on Member Code of Conduct matters.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. On 30 September 2021, Council approved the appointment of Mr Christopher Richards and Ms Helen Richardson as its Independent Persons. They have remained in post as the Council's Independent Persons since that date and their appointment is now due for review.
- 4.2. Mr Richardson and Ms Richards undertook a period of training during the first 12 months of their appointment and were supported during this period by the previous Independent Person who had been in post for eight years. The Independent Persons are consulted by the Monitoring Officer on Member Code of Conduct matters in accordance with the Council's approved arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints and are invited to attend Standards Committee meetings.
- 4.3. Given the uncertainties of Local Government Reorganisation, it is proposed that Mr Christopher Richards and Ms Helen Richardson continue in the role for a

further period of two years. Furthermore, it is proposed that the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee, be delegated authority to extend the appointment up to a further two years.

- 4.4. The appointment of the Independent Persons must be approved by the majority of the membership of the Council.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

At this time, it is not considered cost effective to commence a recruitment process to appoint new individuals to this role. New appointees would require training on the role and support over at least a 12 month period. The Council must have at least one Independent Person appointed in order to comply with the Act.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

The Council would fail to meet its statutory obligations as prescribed by the Act if it did not have access to at least one Independent Person. Previously the Council has appointed only one person to this role. Guidance now states that local authorities should have access to at least two. The current Independent Persons have supported administration of the Code of Conduct and process for considering complaints against members of both the Borough Council and Parish and Town Councils within the Borough.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

An annual allowance is payable to the post-holders in accordance with the Allowance Scheme approved by Council, which is met by existing budgets.

7.2. Legal Implications

The legal implications are set out in the body of this report.

7.3. Equalities Implications

There are no direct implications as a result of this report.

7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

The Independent Persons will be consulted upon complaints concerning member misconduct, including allegations that could constitute criminal offences, such as the failure to declare disclosable pecuniary interests under the Members' Code of Conduct.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	The appointment of Independent Persons supports all Corporate Priorities.
Quality of Life	
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	

9. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED the Council extends the appointment of Mr Christopher Richards and Ms Helen Richardson as its Independent Persons for standards matters under section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 for a period of two years, with authority for the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee, to extend the appointment by further periods up to an additional two years.

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Background papers available for Inspection:	N/A
List of appendices:	N/A