

RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS FOR STANDARDS MATTERS

REPORT OF: SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL
Contact Officer: Lucinda Joyce, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Email: lucinda.joyce@midsussex.gov.uk Tel: 01444 477225
Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: N/A
Report to: Council
24 June 2020

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to appoint the Independent Persons for Standards Matters for a four year term from 24th July 2020.

Summary

2. Vacancies for the position of Independent Persons for Standard Matters have been advertised across the District and applicants have been interviewed by the Appointments Panel. The Council are asked to confirm the Appointment Panel's recommendations regarding the successful applicants.

Recommendations

3. **Council are recommended to:**
 - (i) **appoint three Independent Persons to the Standards Committee (Dr David Horne, Wendy Swinton Eagle and Paul Cummins) for a "four" year term from 24th July 2020 to 30 April 2024.**
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Background

4. The Independent Persons for Standards Matters attend the Standards Committee, which meets about 3 times a year, and also advise the Monitoring Officer on complaints against members received and also throughout the investigation of such a Code of Conduct complaint.
5. Historically, the Council has two Independent Persons for Standards Matters. Tony Cox and Dr David Horne were appointed by Council on 23 March 2016 and their terms of office expired on 30 April 2020. Due to Covid restrictions on meetings it has been extended to 24th July 2020
6. It was agreed by Council that a fair and transparent recruitment process of new independent persons to these vacancies would take place in February/March 2020. This was reported to Council on 29 January 2020, along with a proposed Appointments Panel to conduct the interviews. The Panel's recommendations were to be presented at the Council meeting on 1 April 2020.
7. As a result of Government guidelines regarding social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council meeting of 1 April 2020 was postponed, affecting the proposed start date of the new candidates. In the interim, the two existing Independent Persons were asked to extend their term, until such time as new candidates could be appointed. It is now proposed that the new candidates 4 year term of office will run from 24th July 2020, expiring at the end of the Council year; 30 April 2024.

Recruitment Process

8. Two vacancies were advertised through local media, with town and parish Councils and on the Council's website and social media pages, with a deadline of 21 February 2020 to submit applications. The Appointments Panel (comprising Councillors Webster and Bradbury and Monitoring Officer Tom Clark) interviewed 4 candidates on 5th and 9th March 2020.
9. The Panel also considered the advice of the Committee on Standards in Public Life which suggests that there should be a minimum of 2 Independent Persons on Standards Matters, therefore raising the possibility that this could become a statutory requirement in the next year or so.
10. The Panel was impressed by the quality of the applicants and recommend appointing three candidates, to allow for the ability to maintain a minimum of two in attendance at each meeting. The recommended candidates are:

Name	Term ends	Committee or Panel
Dr David Horne	30 April 2024	Standards Committee
Wendy Swinton Eagle	30 April 2024	Standards Committee
Paul Cummins	30 April 2024	Standards Committee

11. Dr David Horne has served as an Independent Person on Standards Matters for Mid Sussex District Council for the past 4 years and an Independent Person for Brighton and Hove City Council for 8 years. He is a chartered public finance accountant and procurement specialist with an interest in professional standards and codes of conduct. He has been a member of his professional body's Standards Committee since 2015. After nearly 15 years working at director level in national and local policing organisations, he is now working part-time as a finance business partner alongside charity and non-executive roles. He lives in Heathfield.
12. Wendy Swinton Eagle has 12 years' experience serving as a Commissioned Officer in the Women's Royal Army Corps and was the Relocation Officer and Deputy Head of the Allowances Department of the BBC. She has experience of running her own business and has been part of several networking organisations. More recently she was the payroll administrator and bookkeeper at a Nursing Home. She lives in Lindfield.
13. Paul Cummins has experience working in Local Government for 18 years, most of which was as a Monitoring Officer in three District and Borough Councils as well as Head of the Legal Department. He was one of a lead group of Monitoring Officers to draft a Code of Conduct for Kent Authorities following the changes brought about by the Localism Act 2011. He is currently employed as Head of Adjudication Services at the General Pharmaceutical Council, overseeing hearings into Fitness to Practice and conduct issues. He also has experience working as a Parish Clerk. He lives in Tunbridge Wells.

Policy Context

14. The Council has decided to appoint three Independent Persons for Standards Matters in accordance with section 28 (7) of the Localism Act 2011.

Financial Implications

15. There were minimal costs incurred for the recruitment process and these were within budget. An allowance is paid to the Independent Persons. With the increase of a third candidate being appointed, this would be an additional cost of £750 per year in allowances.

Risk Management Implications

16. There are no risk management implications.

Equality and Customer Service Implications

17. The recruitment for new Independent Persons in 2020 was conducted in a fair and transparent way and was open to all members of the public.

Background Papers

None.