



Report to Council

Report of: Director of Legal and Governance

Date: 14th September 2022

Subject: Appointment of the Independent Persons

Author of Report: Sarah Hyde – Democratic Services Team Manager,
Democratic Services

0114 273 4015

Summary:

The report advises Council of the recent appointment of two Independent Persons that assist the Monitoring Officer in dealing with Standards complaints following the recent recruitment process.

Recommendations:

That Council approves the appointment of the two Independent Persons (David Waxman and Karen Widdowson) for a term of four years.

Background Papers:

None

Category of Report: OPEN

Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

Financial implications
YES
Legal implications
NO
Equality of Opportunity implications
NO
Tackling Health Inequalities implications
N/A
Human rights implications
N/A
Environmental and Sustainability implications
N/A
Economic impact
N/A
Community safety implications
N/A
Human resources implications
N/A
Property implications
N/A
Area(s) affected
NONE
Relevant Policy Committee Chair
N/A
Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?
YES
Press release
NO

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The report advises Council of the recent appointments of two Independent Persons that assist the Monitoring Officer in dealing with Standards complaints, following a recent recruitment process.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new statutory framework for dealing with Standards Issues. In July 2012, the Council adopted a new Code of Conduct, created a Standards Committee and adopted a procedure for investigating Standards Complaints. The Act also created the new role of Independent Person which must be appointed by a Council.
- 2.2 This role is reflected in the procedures adopted by the Council. In addition, the role may also involve serving on a panel that would advise the council on matters relating to the dismissal of any of the three Statutory Officers (Head of Paid Services, Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer).
- 2.3 The Independent Persons must be consulted at various stages of the complaints' process and assist the Monitoring Officer in considering complaints that a Member may have breached the Code of Conduct.
- 2.4 The Council Meeting on 5th September 2018 appointed two Independent Persons for a term of four years. This was undertaken jointly with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and the South Yorkshire Joint Fire and Rescue and Integrated Transport Authorities with the remuneration of the posts shared between the three authorities.

3. Recruitment Process

- 3.1 A recruitment process began in July 2022 to appoint two Independent Persons to the new posts. The posts were advertised for a two week period on the Council's website and also on the free job websites at the Sheffield Universities. The existing Independent Persons were eligible to apply for the new posts.

- 3.2 The shortlisted candidates were interviewed on 24th August 2022 and the new appointments were made jointly with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC).
- 3.3 The interview panel comprised of Cllr Colin Ross, Chair of Audit and Standards Committee (SCC), Gillian Duckworth, Director of Legal and Governance/Monitoring Officer (SCC), Sukdave Ghuman, Service Director and Monitoring Officer (BMBC) and Jason Field, Head of Legal Services (BMBC). Two candidates were interviewed by the panel.
- 3.4 Both applicants were considered by the panel to be of a satisfactory standard and had relevant related experience in dealing with standards complaints. The panel considered that the following two applicants should be appointed to the position of Independent Person for a four year term:
- Mr. David Waxman
 - Mrs Karen Widdowson
- 3.5 It is important to note that one of the IP appointments is a person that has worked with the Councils as an Independent for a number of years. The panel considered whether this person can maintain independence after such a period of time in post and were satisfied that as there was a turnover of Monitoring Officers within the Authorities, the independence could be maintained and that both Authorities would benefit from having an experienced voice to provide support to both councillors and Monitoring Officers. However, the panel were also of the opinion that it may be beneficial to appoint additional IPs to ensure the continuation of an independent voice and to increase diversity.

4. Legal and Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications. The two Independent Persons receive their annual allowance of £787.04, split over a monthly basis which is equivalent to the allowance paid to co-opted members of the Council. The allowances are split between Sheffield City Council and Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 That the Council approves the appointment of the two Independent Persons (David Waxman and Karen Widdowson) for a four year term.