

# Council report



19 January 2022

## APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTees TO THE AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEES

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Exempt / confidential / not for publication	<b>No</b>
Council Plan reference	<b>Not in Council Plan</b>
Wards affected	<b>All wards</b>

### Executive summary

This report seeks Full Council approval to appoint co-optees (the details of which are set out in Annex A) to the following Committees:

- 2 x Independent Members of the Audit Committee
- 2 x Parish Representatives on the Standards Committee

Ordinarily, the Committees themselves would make a formal recommendation to Council as to the co-optees, however given the timing, it is expedient that Council receive the appointments with the support of the Chair and Vice Chairs. This will mean that those appointed can sit their first meeting during the final round of meetings for the 2021/22 Council year, as opposed to waiting for the next meeting of each committee to subsequently make such a recommendation to Council.

There are no statutory requirements to appoint co-opted members to the Audit or Standards Committee, but the in the Council's Constitution, the respective Committee's Terms of Reference require such appointments, which:

- a) support Audit Committee to deliver effective financial and wider governance; and
- b) advise the Standards Committee on Parish issues.

Recruitment exercises were undertaken during autumn / winter of 2021, which were led by the Chair(s) and Vice Chairs of the respective committees and supported by officers. In all cases, the appointments are non-voting, for a maximum of 4 years and attract a modest annual allowance.

## 1. Decision/s to be made

- 1.1 That the individuals set out in Annex A, be Co-opted to the Audit, and Standards Committees of Milton Keynes Council, from 1 February 2022, for a period of 4 years from 1 February 2022.

## 2. Why is the decision needed?

- 2.1 Membership of the Audit, and Standards Committee includes three co-opted non-voting positions to each. Until recently, both committees had carried one vacancy for some time, which had not been pursued because of the Coronavirus pandemic. However, a combination of the expiry of appointments, resignations and in one case a Parish representative on Standards Committee being elected to Milton Keynes Council, required a recruitment exercise to fill the existing and arising vacancies.
- 2.2 Notwithstanding the above, during 2021/22 both committees have continued to be served by co-opted members, either because there was an existing co-opted member part way through their appointment (Imtiaz Farooqui – Audit Committee), or because a previous co-opted appointment was extended for a short period (Phil Winsor – Standards Committee).

### Audit Committee

- 2.3 Many local authorities appoint independent members to their Audit Committees and guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), encourages this practice. Independent Members with appropriate skills and experience supplement those of elected Committee members, which brings specialist knowledge and insight to deliberations.
- 2.4 Recruitment to two vacancies was pursued over the autumn of 2021. Four applicants were shortlisted for interview by the Chair and Vice Chairs and two appointments have been recommended.

### Standards Committee

- 2.5 Whilst there is no longer a statutory requirement to appoint parish representatives, one of the principal roles of the Council's Standards Committee is assist Parish councils within the borough to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by their Members. Parish representatives therefore provide context and experience to assist the Committee with this function.
- 2.6 The Council's arrangements for dealing with Standards Allegations, also require that a Parish Councillor sit on any sub-committee considering a complaint made against a Parish Councillor.
- 2.7 Recruitment to three vacancies was pursued over the late summer / autumn of 2021. Six applicants were shortlisted for interview by the Chair and Vice Chairs and two appointments have been recommended. A further recruitment exercise will be undertaken in early 2022 for the remaining vacancy.

### 3. Implications of the decision

Financial	Y	Human rights, equalities, diversity	N
Legal	Y	Policies or Council Plan	N
Communication	N	Procurement	N
Energy Efficiency	N	Workforce	N

#### a) Financial implications

Whilst the appointments attract modest allowances (£640 per annum), the positions are established and there is therefore appropriate budgetary provision.

#### b) Legal implications

In all cases, co-optees must not be disqualified from serving as a member of a principal Council. All of the recommended appointments have completed declarations that confirm this to be the case.

There was formerly a requirement for Standards Committees to appoint Parish representatives, but this requirement was abolished by the Localism Act. Notwithstanding this, many Council's chose to retain the provision and indeed, Milton Keynes Council's arrangements for dealing with standards complaints require that a parish representative is in attendance at a sub-committee meeting dealing with a complaint about a Parish Councillor.

#### c) Other implications

None.

### 4. Alternatives

- 4.1 The Council could choose not to make these appointments, but this would require changes to the Committees' Terms of Reference and the Council's arrangements for dealing with standards complaints. Since there are existing and established reasons for making such appointments, this is not recommended.
- 4.2 Fewer than the recommended number of co-optees could be appointed, but in order to provide greater resilience against absences, turnover and potential conflicts of interest, this is not recommended.
- 4.3 The Council could choose to make the appointments for a shorter term. However, there are provisions for either party (the Council and the Co-optees) to end the appointment sooner than the four-year term if required. Four-year appointments are consistent with other co-optee appointments and minimise the need for recruitment and selection exercises.

## 5. Timetable for implementation

- 5.1 The details of the successful applicants (along with a brief biography) are set out at Annex A.
- 5.2 Once confirmed, the appointments are effective from 1 February 2022 and will run for a period of four years. The subsequent Audit, and Standards Committee Meetings are scheduled for February and March 2022 respectively.

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### List of annexes

Annex A Applicants recommended for appointment as Co-opted Independent Members of Audit and Parish Representatives on Standards Committee.

### List of background papers

None.