

**INDEPENDENT CHAIR**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To consider whether or not to appoint an independent chair of the Standards Committee and if so how to choose the individual.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 Under the Local Government Act 2000 the Standards Committee will need to have someone who is independent of the Council on it as a voting member. Members are invited to appoint an independent person ahead of the legislation. The proposal is that the position would be advertised locally, Members and officers would be invited to submit names, and the Committee would be asked to agree a person specification and the Committee would choose an appropriate person from the pool of individuals who have been put forward.

**3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 That the Standards Committee agree to appoint an independent chair.
- 3.2 That the position be advertised locally.
- 3.3 That the person specification for the post be agreed.
- 3.4 That the Committee choose a candidate from the names that come forward from the process outlined in this report.

#### 4. **Background**

4.1 At its meeting on the 23 February 1999, the Standards Committee considered an item about co-opting external persons as members of its Standards Committee. At that time the Committee did not indicate any interest in pursuing this course of action.

4.2 Under Section 53 of the Local Government Act 2000 a Standards Committee must include at least one person who is not a member, or an officer, of that or any other authority. It is anticipated that this section of the Act will come in to force on the 1 April 2001. Regulations under the Act may require the appointment of an independent person as chair of the Standards Committee. Even if they do not, an independent chair would clearly enhance the perception of independence which is vital to the proper workings of a Standards Committee.

4.3 At its Annual Meeting on 23 May 2000, the Council agreed to co-opt an independent person to act as Chair of the Committee. It is, therefore, open for this Committee to make the selection.

#### 5. **Issues and Choices**

5.1 A mechanism or process needs to be put in place to find an independent person to sit on the Standards Committee. It is suggested that the most appropriate way of choosing from among candidates is to agree a person specification. A draft is available as an **Annex** to this report and Members are invited to consider it.

5.2 It is suggested that the Council might wish to advertise in a local newspaper for suitable candidates. Also Members and officers might be invited to submit names of people whom they consider to be appropriate.

5.3 The Committee could then consider each person who has expressed an interest against the agreed person specification. The Committee could then make a choice from among those interested persons.

#### 6. **Implications**

6.1 Environmental

None.

6.2 Equalities

The person specification should take account of the Council's approach to equalities issues.

6.3 Financial

There is currently no identified budget to fund the expenses of the independent Chair. While it may be possible to meet any expenses in the

current year from within existing budgets, it would be necessary to identify a specific budget for future years.

6.4 Legal

Under Section 53 of the Local Government Act 2000 the Council is required to appoint at least one independent person to its Standards Committee.

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

None.

7. **Conclusions**

7.1 The appointment of an independent person to the Standards Committee is required by the 1 April 2001. It would be sensible to begin the selection process before then.

Background Papers: Local Government Act 2000