



Northumberland County Council

County Council

Wednesday, 17 January 2024

Independent Chair of Standards Committee

Report of Councillor(s) Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources

Responsible Officer(s): Stephen Gerrard, Director of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer

1. **Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan**

Achieving Value For Money - The appointment of an independent Chair of Standards Committee provides independence and fairness, making best use of Council resources.

Tacking Inequality - The recruitment process follows internal HR processes ensuring equality and transparency.

2. **Purpose of report**

To update members on the progress of the recruitment process for a new independent Chair of Standards Committee and to ask for the current Chair to be appointed for a period of one year to enable the recruitment process to be completed.

3. **Recommendations**

- 3.1 To appoint Mr Joe Jackson to the position of Independent Chair of Standards Committee for one year, or if sooner, until a new Independent Chair can be recruited.

4. **Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable**

The report does not involve a key decision.

5. Background

- 5.1 The current composition of the Council's Standards Committee provides for an Independent Chair to preside over its meetings and to be a member champion for the promotion and maintenance of the Council ethical framework in respect of member conduct. While there is no statutory requirement for the Chair of the Standards Committee to be independent, the authority have previously determined that the position would benefit from such a status. The current incumbent, Mr Joe Jackson, was appointed in September 2013, which appointment has been renewed on three separate occasions, the last being on 8th January 2020 for a period of four years.
- 5.2 There is no statutory requirement as to the length of appointment, but it was considered that the position should be exposed to a further open recruitment process. The post was advertised and at their meeting on 12th October 2023 Standards Committee appointed an interview panel.
- 5.3 Following the interview process the panel determined that they were unable to recommend appointment to the role. The current Chair, Mr Jackson, was informed and has agreed to remain in post for a further year or until a new Independent Chair is appointed, subject to the decision of Council.

6. Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations

- 6.1 Extend the tenure of the current Independent Chair of Standards Committee to allow a further recruitment process to appoint a new Independent Chair.
- 6.2 Appoint a Chair from the current membership of the Standards Committee
- 6.3 Option 6.1 is recommended. Council has previously decided upon the value of having an Independent Chair of Standards Committee rather than an elected member undertaking this role. There are no reasons to consider changing this approach.

7. Implications

Policy	Not Applicable
Finance and value for money	The Independent Chair will be paid an allowance of £2,700 per annum which is already provided for within the Council's General Fund Budget.
Legal	None other than those identified in the report
Procurement	Not Applicable
Human resources	Not Applicable
Property	Not Applicable

The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - not required at this point The recruitment process will continue to be carried out in accordance with the Equalities Act 2010
Risk assessment	Not Applicable
Crime and disorder	There are no crime and disorder implications
Customer considerations	The appointment to these two positions gives customers an assurance in relation to the operation of the ethical standards regime
Carbon reduction	Not applicable
Health and wellbeing	No health and wellbeing implications have been identified
Wards	All Wards

8. Background papers

Not Applicable

9. Links to other key reports already published

Standards Committee Report – 12th October 2022

<https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s16856/Independent%20Chair%20of%20Standards%20Committee.pdf>

10. Author and Contact Details

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