



# Northumberland

## County Council

COUNCIL

DATE: 5TH JANUARY 2022

---

### RE-ENDORSEMENT OF APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT CHAIR OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE AND INDEPENDENT PERSON AND APPOINTMENT OF ADDITIONAL INDEPENDENT PERSONS

**Report of the Monitoring Officer**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Wearmouth, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services**

---

#### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of the continued appointment of Joe Jackson, the Independent Chair of the Standards Committee and Karen Milner, the Council's Independent Person under the relevant provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and to request that Council delegates to the Standards Committee the process of the appointment of two further Independent Persons.

#### **Recommendations**

- a) To endorse the continued appointment of the following for the remaining terms of their four year appointment;
  - i. Independent Chair - Mr Joe Jackson
  - ii. Independent Person - Ms Karen Milner; and
- b) To delegate to the Standards Committee in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer the appointment of two further Independent Persons.
- c) Should any consequential constitutional amendment be required to delegate this to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the advisory Member's Constitution Working Group

#### **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the "How" priority included in the NCC Corporate Plan.

#### **Key issues**

The positions of Independent Chair of Standards Committee and Independent Person were appointed by Council following an open recruitment process in January 2020 for a

four year term with the recommendation that their appointments be reviewed after two years.

## **Background**

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 and the current incumbent, Mr Joe Jackson, was appointed in January 2020 for period of four years, which appointment has been renewed on three separate occasions. The position was exposed to an open recruitment process.
2. In addition to the position of Independent Chair the Council are required, by the Localism Act 2011, to appoint at least one independent person who has a role to play primarily in the assessment of complaints in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer as well as supporting the work of the Standards Committee. The current incumbent, Karen Milner, was appointed in this capacity in 2020 again, after an open recruitment process for a period of four years, to be reviewed after two years.
3. Other Councils regionally have more than one Independent Person and it believed to be prudent for Northumberland County Council to have two further Independent Persons. On the last occasion the recruitment process was undertaken by representatives of the Standards Committee together with the Monitoring Officer and it is requested that Council delegates the process to the Standards Committee in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer. Should Council resolve to do so, the process of advertising the vacant positions of two further Independent Persons can commence with the interview panel then comprising a small number of the members of the Standards Committee.
4. Members will be aware of Mr Jackson's work with the Standards Committee in the last number of years since his initial appointment to the position of independent Chair, and the Panel believed on his appointment in 2020 that his experience in the role will continue to benefit the work of the Standards Committee and the promotion of the elected members' ethical framework throughout Northumberland.
5. Ms Milner has assisted officers since her appointment with tasks given to her in a timely and thorough manner and has an extensive career background in the public sector principally with the former Learning and Skills Council and Skills Funding Agency. She believes that it is vital that people in positions of responsibility - such as elected members - should lead by example and set standards of behaviour for others to follow and ensure that they demonstrate the highest levels of integrity.

## Implications

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Policy</b>  | N/A   |
| <b>Finance and value for money</b>   | The Independent Chair and independent person will each be paid an allowance of £2,700 per annum which is already provided for within the Council's General Fund Budget. |
| <b>Legal</b>   | These are as set out in the report  |
| <b>Procurement</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Human Resources</b>   | The Council's recruitment and selection good practice standards was adhered to in the selection process   |
| <b>Property</b>  | N/A   |
| <b>Equalities</b><br>(Impact Assessment attached)<br>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/><br>N/A <input type="checkbox"/> | The recruitment process was open to all sections of the community   |
| <b>Risk Assessment</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>  | N/A   |
| <b>Customer Consideration</b>  | N/A   |
| <b>Carbon reduction</b>  | N/A   |
| <b>Wards</b>   | All   |

## Background papers:

Localism Act 2011

## Report sign off.

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
|   | Full name of officer |
| Monitoring Officer/Legal                        | Suki Binjal          |
| Service Director Finance & Interim S151 Officer | Jan Willis           |
| Relevant Executive Director                     |                      |

|                     |                                    |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Chief Executive     |                                    |
| Portfolio Holder(s) | Councillor<br>Richard<br>Wearmouth |

**Author and Contact Details**

Suki Binjal, Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

Email: [suki.binjal@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:suki.binjal@northumberland.gov.uk),