

(Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the committee scheduled to be held on 29 November 2018.)

Standards Committee

19 July 2018

Present: Councillor M Rankin (Chair)
Councillors, EN Darke, C Johnson, K Lee, F Lott, P Mason and
CB Pickard

SC01/07/18 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Brian Burdis and Janet Hunter.

SC02/07/18 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

SC03/07/18 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

SC04/07/18 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous Standards Committee meeting held on 8 March 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

SC05/07/18 Appointment of Independent Members

The Committee considered the report on the appointment of Independent Persons. It was noted that the three prospective Independent Persons were in attendance at the meeting.

The report asked the Committee to make a recommendation to full Councillor to renew the existing appointments of the current holders of the role of Independent Person; to set a maximum term of office; and to appoint an additional Independent Person bringing the total to three.

The Committee noted that the current term of appointment of both of the Authority's two current Independent Persons, Mr George Clark and Ms Stella Gardner end in July 2018.

Following consultation with the Elected Mayor and the Chair of the Standards Committee it had been proposed that the number of Independent Persons be increased from two to three in order to allow for greater flexibility and minimise the potential for any conflict of interest where:

- a. an Independent Person has, for example, been involved in an initial assessment decision and the complainant seeks a review of the that decision; or

- b. a member who is the subject of a complaint has contacted an Independent Person for support and that matter proceeds to a final hearing at which the Independent Persons are requested to give advice and support to the Standards Sub-committee.

The report also proposes that the term of office of an Independent Person be no more than a maximum of ten years. At the current time there is no specified maximum. The appointment of a third Independent Person will also assist in succession planning when the two current Independent Persons reach the ten year threshold of their appointments.

It was noted that a full recruitment exercise had commenced in early May/June 2018. Eleven applications were received and following a shortlisting process, four candidates, including the current holders of the roles were interviewed. The interviews were conducted by the Elected Mayor, the Chair of the Standards Committee and Councillor Paul Mason, supported by the Head of Law and Governance. The selection Panel identified three suitable candidates: Mr George Clark, Ms S Gardner and Dr S Green.

The report also highlighted that should the above matters be agreed, consequential amendments to the Authorities Local Arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Code of Conduct will be required. The suggested amendments were attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The Committee was content with the proposals to increase the number of Independent Persons to three, to appoint the three candidates identified above for a term of 4 years, and to introduce a maximum term of office of ten years.

There was some discussion about the proposed changes to the Local Arrangements and it was suggested that an amendment be made to page 4 to specify that one Independent Persons be consulted rather than two to allow greater flexibility through the process. There was also some discussion about limiting the number of Independent Persons that can be contacted by the subject of a complaint and it was suggested that the model letter be reviewed to specify an Independent Person available for advice

A Member highlighted an issue on page 31 and requested that reference be made to his/her in place of his throughout the document.

Resolved that the Committee recommend to full Council that:

- a. the number of Independent Persons be increased to three;
- b. a maximum ten year term of office for an Independent Member be implemented;
- c. Mr George Clark, Ms Stella Gardner and Dr Stuart Green be appointed as the Authority's Independent Persons for a period of four years to 31 July 2022;
- d. Consequential amendments to the Local Arrangements for dealing with Complaints under the Code of Conduct be made, taking account of comments from the Committee.

SC6/07/18 Standards Committee Action Plan/Work Programme 2018-19

The Committee considered the Action Plan/Work Programme of the Standards Committee for 2018-19.

The Committee noted that training will be provided to Independent Persons and that North Tyneside had offered to provide training on a regional basis to be arranged in the autumn.

In relation to the action to monitor the operation of the new Members' Code of Conduct, it was noted that in the past a small working group has been convened to undertake this role. Councillors M Rankin, B Pickard and C Johnson expressed an interest in being part of this group.

Resolved that the Work Programme/Action Plan 2018-19 be agreed.

Signed by: -----

Date: -----

Cllr M Rankin, Chair of the Standards Committee