

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **26th January, 2023**

Report Subject: **Standards Committee Appointment**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor S. Thomas, Leader / Cabinet Member
Corporate Overview & Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Andrea Jones, Head of Legal & Corporate
Compliance (Monitoring Officer)**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
Yes	Yes for information						Yes	Standards Committee

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Council approval of a new appointment to the Blaenau Gwent Standards Committee.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 In order to comply with legislative requirements, Council is required to approve all new appointments to the Standards Committee.

In July 2022, an Independent (see definition explained below) Member namely Miss Helen Roberts, served her first term permitted under regulations and made the decision to not remain for a second term so stood down as a member of the Standards Committee. Therefore, a vacancy was advertised in August 2022 which was initially unsuccessful and resulted in a second advertisement in October 2022.

The vacancy must be filled in order to comply with the composition requirements for a Standards Committee.

The vacancy in question can only be filled by an 'Independent Member'. For clarity, in terms of a Standards Committee, an independent member means a member who is not –

- (a) an Elected Member of the County Borough Council,
- (b) an officer, or
- (c) the spouse of a member or an officer of the relevant authority concerned, any other relevant authority, or a community council.

- 2.2 Of the candidates interviewed, one candidate met the minimum criteria for appointment, namely Miss Jennifer White.

- 2.3 It is therefore recommended that Miss White be appointed as a member of the Standards Committee, as from 26th January 2023.

The term of office will initially be for 6 years; however, the relevant Regulations enable members to sit for a further consecutive term of up to 4 years. A report will be brought before Council prior to the end of the initial term, in order for the re-appointment to be considered.

- 2.4 In addition a second candidate also met the minimum criteria, namely Ms Sarah Manuel. It is recommended that Ms Manuel be approved as a reserve appointee should a vacancy become available in the future.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** (Preferred option)

Approve the appointment outlined above to the Standards Committee, and in addition approve the reserve candidate to provide cover should a vacancy become available.

Option 2: Approve the appointment outlined above to the Standards Committee but choose to not appoint a reserve appointee at this time.

Option 3: Do not appoint and re-advertise both positions.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

Establishment and maintenance of a Standards Committee is a statutory responsibility.

5. **Implications and risks against Each Option**

Option 1 is preferred as the Council is then taking positive steps to comply with legislative requirements.

Option 2 would mean that the Council is compliant but would mean incurring further recruitment costs should another vacancy become available in the near future.

Option 3 would mean that the Council is non-compliant until further steps are taken to recruit.

There are no financial implications associated with the report other than the costs of future recruitment.

5.3 **Legal**

The appointment aims to prevent the risk of non-compliance with statutory obligations. The appointment will ensure the Council complies with statutory requirements and guidance on Standards Committee membership.

5.4 **Human Resources**

N/A

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

The changes are necessary to maintain an effective Standards Committee that promotes and upholds the high standards of conduct required of members.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

An effective Standards Committee that conforms with the requirements of the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 and the Standards Committees (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006, and promotes confidence in effective democracy and accountability.

6.3 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**

The Standards Committee supports involvement as it provides an opportunity for challenge.

6.4 **Thinking for the long term (forward planning)**

This will ensure the Council meets its current statutory obligations and plans for the longer term, providing stakeholders with assurance around its governance arrangements

6.5 **Preventative focus**

The appointment will assist to prevent the risk of operating ultra vires (outside the law).

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

N/A

6.7 **Integration(across service areas)**

N/A

6.8 **EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)**

N/A

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

The Standards Committee is kept under review to ensure it complies with any changes in legislation and codes of practice. Any further amendments will be put before full Council for formal approval.

Background Documents /Electronic Links