

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **18th July, 2024**

Report Subject: **Ethics & Standards Committee Appointment**

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

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

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	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 Ethics & 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 Ethics and Standards Committee.

In June 2024 a current serving independent member of the committee Sarah Rosser notified the committee of her intention to step down from the post due to commitments away from the committee.

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

The vacancy in question can only be filled by an 'Independent Member'. For clarity, in terms of an Ethics & 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 In a previous recruitment exercise in January 2023 Council, at the time of recruiting another independent member, approved the appointment of a reserve member of the committee, Ms Sarah Manuel.
 - 2.3 It is therefore recommended that Ms Manuel be promoted from reserve member to an independent member of the Ethics and Standards Committee in line with the previous decision taken by Council.

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.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

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

Approve the appointment outlined above to the Ethics & Standards Committee.

Option 2: Advertise the post and undertake a full recruitment exercise.

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 and utilise the reserve member already appointed.

Option 2 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 Ethics & Standards Committee that promotes and upholds the high standards of conduct required of members.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

An effective Ethics & Standards Committee that conforms with the requirements of the Ethics & 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 Ethics & 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 ***EqlA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***
N/A
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
The Ethics & 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