

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Report of the Monitoring Officer to Full Council – 2 October 2012

Recruitment of an Independent Person to work with Taunton Deane Borough Council's Standards Committee

At the meeting of Full Council in July 2012, Members agreed a series of recommendations relating to the introduction of a new Standards Regime for Taunton Deane in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

One of the recommendations related to the appointment of an Independent Person to work with the Council's new Standards Committee, together with a reserve.

The functions of the Independent Person(s) are –

- They must be consulted by the authority before it makes a finding as to whether a member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct or decides on action to be taken in respect of that member (this means on a decision to take no action where the investigation finds no evidence of breach or, where the investigation finds evidence that there has been a breach, on any local resolution of the complaint, or on any finding of breach and on any decision on action as a result of that finding);
- They may be consulted by the authority in respect of a standards complaint at any other stage; and
- They may be consulted by a member or co-opted member of the District Council or of a Parish Council against whom a complaint has been made.

Following public advertisement, four candidates were interviewed by a Panel comprising Councillors Gaines, A Govier and A Wedderkopp and the Democratic Service Manager and Corporate Support Lead, Richard Bryant.

The Panel unanimously agreed that Mrs Louise Somerville-Williams should be appointed as the Council's Independent Person.

Mrs Somerville-Williams is ideally suited to this role having previously served as the Vice-Chairman of Mendip District Council's Standards Committee over the past ten years. She was also a Member of the Standards Board for England's Annual Assembly Conference Planning Committee.

The Panel also unanimously agreed that Ms Lynda Williams should be appointed as the reserve Independent Person.

Until earlier in the year, Ms Williams had worked in various roles with Wiltshire Council and she was able to demonstrate a depth of knowledge relating to Standards in Local Government and would be more than capable of undertaking the role of Independent Person if called upon to do so.

In order to comply with the terms of the Council's Constitution the appointments have to be formally made by Full Council.

It is therefore **recommended** that:-

- (1) Mrs Louise Somerville-Williams be appointed as Taunton Deane Borough Council's Independent Person to work alongside the Standards Committee; and
- (2) Ms Lynda Williams be appointed as Taunton Deane Borough Council's reserve Independent Person.

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