

Appointment of Independent Persons

Information for Applicants

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1. Introduction

This booklet provides information on the role of the independent person. It should give the information you need to help you decide whether to apply to be an independent person in connection with standards issues. If you need any further information, please contact: Caroline Marshall on 01432 260249 or email caroline.marshall3@herefordshire.gov.uk.

2. Background Information

Independent persons

Under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 the way that Herefordshire Council dealt with conduct complaints about its elected members and town and parish councilors changed on 1 July 2012.

The Council is responsible for deciding how to deal with standards issues at a local level, including adopting its own local code and determining what arrangements it will adopt to deal with complaints.

The Act provides that the Council must appoint an Independent person to assist in discharging these responsibilities. There is currently one independent person and the council is seeking to appoint another 1 or 2 for a period of 4 years. Full details of the role and responsibilities of the Independent Person are included in this pack.

The council will reimburse travel and subsistence expenses (where appropriate).

Herefordshire Council

a. *Council Management Structure:*

Chief Executive – Alistair Neill

The Council is divided into three directorates:

- Adults and wellbeing – Stephen Vickers
- Children’s Wellbeing – Chris Baird
- Economy, Communities and Corporate – Geoff Hughes

b. *Budget/Staff*

The Council's net revenue budget is £145,025 million (2017/18) and it employed 1,227 staff at 31 March 2017 based at the Plough Lane offices and a number of outlying offices.

c. *Political Composition*

Herefordshire Council currently comprises 53 elected members covering 53 wards. Councillors are elected to the council every 4 years and the next elections are due to held in May 2019. The current political make-up is as follows:

- Conservative – 27 councillors
- Herefordshire Independents – 9 councillors
- It's OUR County! – 9 councillors
- Liberal Democrats – 2 councillors
- Green – 4
- Unaffiliated – 2
- Total: 53

Parish and town councils

Parish councils are run by councillors, who volunteer their time to make their community a better place. Their work falls into three main categories:

- Representing the local community
- Delivering services to meet local needs
- Striving to improve the quality of life in the parish

Herefordshire has 133 democratically elected parish councils and has approximately 1,234 parish councillors. There are five town councils and one city council. These are also parish councils and each has a mayor. Councillors are elected to the council every 4 years and the next elections are due to held in May 2019.

3. Additional Information

Essential criteria

The independent person will have:

- a keen interest in standards in public life.
- a wish to serve the local community and uphold local democracy.
- the ability to be objective, independent and impartial.

- sound decision making skills
- leadership qualities, particularly in respect of exercising sound judgement.

The Independent Person will:

- be a person in whose impartiality and integrity the public can have confidence.
- understand and comply with confidentiality requirements.
- have a demonstrable interest in local issues.
- have an awareness of the importance of ethical behaviours.
- be a good communicator.

Desirable additional criteria are:

- working knowledge/experience of local government or other public service and/or of large complex organisations and awareness of and sensitivity to the political process.
- knowledge and understanding of judicial/quasi-judicial or complaints processes.

You should demonstrate in your application how you meet the above criteria as this will assist the short-listing process.

Means of assessment will be by application form and by interview.

4 ROLE DESCRIPTION

Responsible to: The Council

Liaison with: Monitoring Officer, members of the Standards Panel, officers and members of Herefordshire Council and Town and Parish Councillors within the Herefordshire.

- To assist the Council in promoting high standards of conduct by elected and co-opted members of Herefordshire Council and town and parish councillors and in particular to uphold the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council and the seven principles of public office, namely selflessness, honesty, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness and leadership.
- To be consulted by the Council through the Monitoring Officer before it makes a decision on an investigated allegation and to be available to attend meetings of the Standards Panel, if necessary.

- c) To be available for consultation by the Monitoring Officer before a decision is taken as to whether to investigate a complaint or to seek local resolution of the same.
- d) To be available for consultation by any elected member, including town and parish councillors, who is the subject of a standards complaint.
- e) To develop a sound understanding of the ethical framework as it operates within Herefordshire Council and its town and parish councils.
- f) To participate in training events to develop skills, knowledge and experience and in networks developed for Independent Persons operating outside the council's area.
- g) To act as advocate and ambassador for the Council in promoting ethical behaviour.
- h) To form part of an investigating and disciplinary panel in relation to disciplinary action being considered against the head of paid service, the monitoring or the S151 officers.

4. Disqualification

A person cannot be appointed as an Independent Person if they are or were within a period of 5 years prior to the appointment:

- a member, co-opted member or officer of the authority.
- a member, co-opted member or officer of a parish council in the Council's area, or a relative or close friend of the above.

5. Removal from the Panel.

The Council will have the right to remove an individual member from the Panel before the end of an appointed term expires in special circumstances such as:

- For any of the reasons detailed above.
- Persistent non availability
- Breach of confidentiality
- Conduct causes disrepute and/or prejudices its impartiality of the complaints process or its effective operation.