

Meeting:	Audit and governance committee
Meeting date:	9 May 2016
Title of report:	Appointment of an independent person for standards matters
Report by:	Monitoring officer

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To recommend the appointment of an independent person for standards matters.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) Mr Richard Stow is recommended to council for appointment**

Alternative options

- 1 Not to recommend this appointment.

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 The Localism Act 2011 requires that the council must appoint “at least one independent person” whose views are sought and taken into account before it makes its decision on an allegation of a breach of the code of conduct that it has decided to investigate. Their view may also be sought in dealing with allegations which have not been investigated and may be available for subject members who are the subject of an allegation.

Key considerations

- 3 The council last appointed two independent persons in July 2013 and currently has one independent person, Mr John Sharman.
- 4 Council authorised recruitment of up to three independent persons to the monitoring officer in May 2012.
- 5 Following a recruitment exercise, Mr Stow was shortlisted and invited to an interview on 29 April 2016. The interview panel comprised Councillors BA Durkin, FM Norman, the monitoring officer and Mr John Sharman.
- 6 The interview took the form of questions which were scored. The unanimous decision of the panel was that Mr Stow was an excellent candidate and should be recommended for appointment. Character references were sought which came back as very satisfactory.
- 7 Mr Stow is currently a partner in a horticultural business in Rowlestone in south-west Herefordshire. He has previously been an elected member of Crucorney Community Council in Monmouthshire, including two years as Chairman. He was also previously a Welsh Government member of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, where he chaired the Audit & Scrutiny Committee and sat on the Planning Committee. He has an appreciation of standards matters from the perspective of the public and as an elected member, and has a keen interest in increasing public confidence in local democracy.
- 8 Mr Stow meets the requirements and qualifying criteria to be appointed to such a role and will be required to declare any interests.
- 9 The recruitment of Mr Stow will ensure good governance of the standards process and avoid any potential conflicts of interest, which can arise when only one independent person is available.

Community impact

- 10 The public expectation is that the council has adequate, objective and transparent measures in place to deal with standards complaints. The appointment of Mr Stow will help to ensure this.

Equality duty

- 11 There are no equality duty implications in this report.

Financial implications

- 12 Council agreed in May 2012 that independent persons will be entitled to reimbursement of expenses.

Legal implications

- 13 The appointment will ensure that the council is able to meet the requirements of the Localism Act 2011

Risk management

- 14 There is a reputational risk to the council if it is unable to manage effectively its standards complaints process. There is also a risk to councillors if there are no independent mechanisms in place to support them if they are subject to an allegation.

Consultees

- 15 Not applicable.

Appendices

- None.

Background papers

- None identified.