

PROPOSED RECRUITMENT PACK FOR APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON

Are you interested in local democracy? Would you like to help the Council promote high standards of councillor conduct?

If you are interested in local government, politically aware but unaffiliated, we would welcome you to apply to work as an Independent Person for member standards across West Surrey. The Council is looking to recruit two Independent Persons to undertake this important role.

Under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to appoint at least one Independent Person to assist the Council in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst its elected members and town and parish councillors.

The Independent Person(s) will be consulted when we receive a complaint that a Councillor has breached the member Code of Conduct; on decisions to investigate complaints; and before a decision is made on an investigated complaint. The Independent Person(s) may also be consulted on other standards matters, including by the member who is subject to an allegation.

You would play a key role in ensuring public and councillor confidence in the Council's arrangements for dealing with complaints.

The Independent Person(s) is consulted on complaints on a case-by-case basis by the Monitoring Officer and may also be asked to advise individual members who may be the subject of a complaint.

The Independent Persons will also be involved in the event of disciplinary action against any of the Council's statutory officers (Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer). In these circumstances a panel of at least two Independent Persons will be appointed for the purpose of advising the Council on matters relating to the dismissal of these officers.

A fixed allowance estimated to be in the region of £1,159 per annum will be paid, together with expenses for travel, subsistence and other expenses in accordance with the West Surrey Shadow Authority Scheme of Members' Allowances, provided that these expenses are not also being met by a third party.

Engagement is initially for a 2-year period, commencing on 1 April 2027, with the possibility of an extension for a further two years from the date of appointment.

For further details, including an information pack and eligibility criteria, please visit the

Council's website or contact: Susan Sale, Monitoring Officer (Interim),

Email: monitoring.officer@westsurrey.gov.uk

The closing date for applications is 27 November 2027. Those applicants invited to interview will be notified shortly after that date.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 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 at least one Independent Person to assist in discharging these responsibilities. The Council is looking to appoint two Independent Persons to undertake this role. Full details of the role and responsibilities of the Independent Person are included in this Recruitment Pack.

The Council will confirm the appointment of the Independent Person(s) at a meeting of its full Council in March 2027.

Selection Criteria / Skills and Competencies

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 and offer authoritative and impartial
- advice and make decisions grounded in sound reasoning and impartiality;
- sound decision making skills; and
- 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 political nature of local authorities and sensitivity to how this
- might impact on the ethical standards regime
- have an awareness of the importance of ethical behaviours;
- ability to analyse and interpret substantial and complex information (written and verbal)
- and to synthesise which is important and relevant;
- have excellent listening skills;
- be able to work constructively with members of the public, elected and co-opted members and senior officers of the council;
- have the ability and willingness to constructively challenge accepted views and put
- forward alternative perspective where this is appropriate;
- be a good communicator;
- be contactable during normal working hours and be available to attend hearings and committee meetings which may be held at relatively short notice and during normal working hours.

Desirable Additional Criteria

- 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.
- An understanding of dispute resolution processes such as mediation

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.

Eligibility for Appointment

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

- a member, co-opted member or officer of West Surrey Shadow Authority, Surrey County Council or any of the sovereign councils within the West Surrey area.
- A member, co-opted member or officer of a parish council in the West Surrey Shadow Authority's area, or
- a relative or close friend of the above.

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Responsible to: The Council

Liaison with: Monitoring Officer, members of the Standards or relevant Committee with Standards functions , officers and members of the Council and Town and Parish Councillors within the council area, key stakeholders within the community.

1. To assist the Council in promoting high standards of conduct by elected and co-opted members of Cumberland 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, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
2. To be consulted by the Council through the Monitoring Officer and/or relevant Standards Committee before it makes a decision on an investigated allegation and to be available to attend meetings of any Hearing Panel for this purpose.
3. To be available for consultation by the Monitoring Officer and/or Standards Committee or any sub-committee before a decision is taken as to whether to investigate a complaint or to seek local resolution of the same.
4. To be available for consultation by any elected member, including a town and parish councillor, who is the subject of a standards complaint.
5. To develop a sound understanding of the ethical framework as it operates within Cumberland Council and its town and parish councils.

6. To participate in training events to develop skills, knowledge and experience and in networks developed for Independent Persons operating outside the Council's area.
7. To attend training events organised and promoted by the Council's relevant Standards Committee.
8. To act as advocate and ambassador for the Council in promoting ethical behaviour.
9. The Council may also invite Independent Persons to be considered for appointment to an advisory panel in the event of disciplinary proceedings leading to the dismissal of the Head of Paid Service, the Chief Finance Officer or the Monitoring Officer.

APPLICATION FORM

Individuals who wish to be considered for appointment as Independent Person at West Surrey Council are requested to provide the following information to support their application.

All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be used for the purposes of selecting and appointing the Independent Person.

Please use a separate continuation page if you wish to expand upon your answer to any question outlined below.

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

CONTACT DETAILS

Daytime Telephone Number:

Evening Phone number/mobile:

Email Address:

2. QUALIFICATIONS

(Please list any qualifications which you think are relevant to the position of Independent Person)

3. SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE

(Please give a brief account of your experience including career, public and voluntary work together with the nature of your current or most recent occupation)

4. RELEVANT EXPERTISE/SKILLS

(Please outline briefly any knowledge or expertise which you believe would be particularly relevant to your role as an Independent Person having regard to the selection criteria and role description)

5. Why do you wish to be considered for appointment as Independent Person and what particular attributes do you believe you would bring to the role?

6. Please provide any additional information you may wish to give in support of your application:

**7. References may be taken up for all applicants who are invited for interview
Your referees' knowledge of you should be relevant to the person
specification for the role(s) for which you are applying.**

Referee 1	Referee 2
Name	Name
Address	Address
Tel No.	Tel No.

I wish to apply to be an Independent Person.

In submitting this application, I declare that:

- I am not and have not during the past five years been a member, co-opted member or officer of West Surrey Shadow Authority, Surrey Council or any of the District or Borough Council within the West Surrey Area or of any Town or Parish Council within the authority's area.
- I am not related to, or a close friend of, any Member or Officer of the above Councils or of any Town or Parish Council within the West Surrey area.
- I do not have a public profile in party politics including a role on the management or selection committee(s) of a registered political party, nor have I been a candidate or canvasser for a registered political party at a local or national level.
- I am not currently an officer or member, or co-opted member of any other relevant authority (this includes parish, district, county and unitary councils and Police and Fire Authorities), nor have been for the last five years.
- I do not have an existing contractual or commercial relationship with the above Council, or with any Town or Parish Council within the West Surrey area, that could cause a potential conflict of interest.
- I have not been convicted of a criminal offence (excluding minor traffic offences) in the last five years.
- I have read the privacy notice attached to this Application Form.

Signed

Date

Please return your application to:

The Monitoring Officer, email: monitoring.officer@westsurrey.gov.uk

Privacy Notice

UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018

Your personal information will only be used by the Council:

- to contact you;
- to help determine your suitability for the role(s) applied for.

To enable the Council to do this we may also share your personal information with your nominated referees. Other than this, the Council will hold your personal information securely and in the strictest confidence.

If your application is successful and the Council appoints you to the role of Independent Person/Substitute Independent Persons, the Council will retain your personal information, other than information relating to the payment of allowances or expenses, for the term of your office plus one year, whereon it will be securely destroyed. Information relating to the payment of allowances or expenses will be kept for six years or such longer period as may be required by HMRC.

If your application is unsuccessful, the Council will securely destroy your personal information within three months of the date of the letter or e-mail notifying you that you were unsuccessful.