

Council



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Appointment of Independent Persons	
Report No:	COU/FH/17/016	
Report to and date/s:	Council	14 June 2017
Committee Chairman:	Councillor David Bowman Chairman, West Suffolk Joint Standards Committee Tel: 07711 593737 Email: david.bowman@forest-heath.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Leah Mickleborough Service Manager (Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer Tel: 01284 757162 Email: leah.mickleborough@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Purpose of report:	This report seeks Council approval to appoint Independent Persons for West Suffolk.	
Recommendation:	It is recommended that Council: (1) Agrees to re-appoint Mr Arnold Barrow as an Independent Person until 1 July 2019; and (2) Agrees to appoint Mrs Zoe Finn as an Independent Person until 1 July 2019.	
Key Decision:	<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Consultation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Members of the West Suffolk Joint Standards Committee have been informed of the proposed appointment directly	

Alternative option(s):		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council is required to have an Independent Person as a result of the Localism Act. Were Council minded not to approve the current appointment, a temporary solution would be required until a new appointment process could be undertaken 	
Implications:			
Are there any financial implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any staffing implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any ICT implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any legal and/or policy implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed appointment ensures the Council is compliant with its obligations under the Localism Act 2011 	
Are there any equality implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
The Independent Person fails to provide informed and carefully considered judgements, resulting in a loss of public confidence in the standards system	Low	The independent appointment process has been robust, and appropriate training is provided to independent persons to ensure they are fully aware of the responsibilities	Low
Ward(s) affected:		All Wards	
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		Report to West Suffolk Joint Standards Committee on the process to appoint an Independent Person: http://svr-mgov-01:9070/documents/s19985/JST.JT.17.001%20Appointment%20of%20Independent%20Persons%20Report.pdf	
Documents attached:		None	

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation(s)

- 1.1.1 The Localism Act created the requirement for all authorities to appoint an Independent Person who must give their thoughts on allegations that a Parish, Town or District Councillor has breached the Code of Conduct. In addition, should the Council decide to take disciplinary action against its statutory officers, a panel, including at least two Independent Persons, may need to be convened. The appointment of Independent Persons must be confirmed by a Council vote.
- 1.1.2 Forest Heath Council originally joined the Suffolk-wide pool of Independent Persons, but in 2014 a separate appointment process was undertaken for the two West Suffolk councils alone. As a result, two Independent Persons – Mrs Joy Inameti and Mr Arnold Barrow were appointed. Mrs Inameti has recently confirmed that she does not intend to continue in the role and Mr Barrow’s appointment would also be due to expire.
- 1.2.3 Mr Arnold Barrow has consistently provided a robust opinion to the matters in hand on a timely basis, and it is proposed by the Standards Committee to continue his appointment. This will also help to ensure continuity and consistency as the new Independent Person adapts to the role.
- 1.2.4 The Standards Committee agreed an appointment process for the vacancy left by Mrs Inameti. A number of high-quality applications were received, and 4 candidates were shortlisted for interviews, undertaken by the Monitoring Officer, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee. Following this process, it is now recommended that Mrs Zoe Finn be appointed by Council.
- 1.2.5 Mrs Finn has a long history of public service, having first worked as a psychiatric nurse in Wales, before retraining as a Police Officer and serving in Thames Valley, Essex and Suffolk, finishing at Detective Inspector level. Subsequently, she has retrained as a plumber and now runs her own plumbing business. She lives in West Suffolk, and impressed the interview panel with her balanced views between the need to follow due procedure whilst recognising the sensitivity of the situations that can arise and the challenges Councillors faced.
- 1.2.6 It is proposed to make both appointments until 1 July 2019, to align with the current electoral term.