

# RECRUITMENT PACK FOR APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

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Dear

## **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Thank you for your recent enquiry about becoming an Independent Member of the Standards Committee. I am very pleased that you have expressed an interest in the position.

I enclose some further information and an application form. With this letter you should receive: -

1. The current Code of Conduct for Members.
2. Current Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee
3. A guide to Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 - Local Authorities (produced by the Standards Board).
4. An application and reference form.
5. The criteria that will be used in the selection process.

You may also find it helpful to refer to the Standards Board's website which is [www.standardsboard.co.uk](http://www.standardsboard.co.uk).

The appointment process is as follows: -

You must return the application form together with reference form duly completed by close of business on

Your application will then be considered and a shortlist of candidates for interview will be produced. You will be notified if you have been short listed and invited for interview. Interviews will be held on ... and will take place at ...

The interview will take the traditional form of questions and answers. There will not be any other tests or activities.

If you want to know anything more about the process, please contact ...

### **The Role of the Independent Member**

The role of independent members on the committee is considered so important by the Government that the committee will not be able to conduct any business unless at least one independent member is present. Our committee currently comprises...

The business of the committee includes monitoring the effectiveness of the Code of Conduct and arranging training for members on this and similar issues. The full terms of reference are enclosed.

The committee also considers individual complaints about Members' conduct referred to it by either the Standards Board for England or the Council's Monitoring Officer from time to time. This includes complaints relating to both District Councillors and Parish Councillors within the district's area. The committee meets as and when necessary to deal with the business before it. Meetings may be held at relatively short notice when it is necessary to conduct local determination hearings. On average, the committee has met four times a year but this could increase if it has to deal with an increased volume of local hearings.

Please note that independent members of the committee must not now be, nor during the last five years have been a Member or employee of the District Council or of any Parish in the district's area. Anyone related to, or a close friend of, any Member or employee of the Council is also excluded.

There is a small allowance (currently £            per annum) attaching to the position of Independent Member to the Standards Committee. The Council will also reimburse travel and subsistence expenses.

I hope that having read this letter and the material enclosed with it, you will wish to apply to join the Standards Committee in discharging its important role. If you would like to be considered, please complete the form and return it to me. If you would like to talk about what would be involved, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Enclosures

**GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF HOLDING PUBLIC OFFICE  
(THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES (GENERAL PRINCIPLES) ORDER 2001)**

The ten general principles (set out below) form the basis of the Members' Code of Conduct.

**Selflessness**

1. Members should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

**Honesty and Integrity**

2. Members should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.

**Objectivity**

3. Members should make decisions on merit, including when making appointments awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.

**Accountability**

4. Members should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.

**Openness**

5. Members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.

**Personal Judgement**

6. Members may take account of the views of others, including their political groups, but should reach their own conclusions on the issues before them and act in accordance with those conclusions.

**Respect for Others**

7. Members should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers and its other employees.

**Duty to Uphold the Law**

8. Members should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.

**Stewardship**

9. Members should do whatever they are able to do to ensure that their authorities use their resources prudently and in accordance with the law.

**Leadership**

10. Members should promote and support these principles by leadership and by example and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.

## **ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Council is required by law to establish a Standards Committee. The role and responsibilities of the Standards Committee is set out below: -

1. Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the authority
2. Assisting members and co-opted members of the authority to observe the authority's Code of Conduct
3. Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct
4. Monitoring and advising the Council on the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct
5. Advising, training or arranging to train members and co-opted members of the authority on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct
6. Granting dispensations to Councillors and co-opted members from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct
7. Dealing with any reports from the Monitoring Officer or an Investigating Officer on behalf of the Monitoring Officer and dealing with any reports referred by an Ethical Standards Officer for local determination
8. Exercising all of the above functions in respect of Parish Councils within the district and members of those Parish Councils
9. \*To investigate and consider alleged breaches by Members of the District Council of the Financial Regulations adopted from time to time by the Council
10. \*(To deal with unresolved issues arising under the Member/Officer protocol referred by the Leader and/or Chief Executive.)

\*(Add to/alter/amend as necessary)

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**  
**APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER**

The Council is required to have a Standards Committee to oversee the standards and ethics of elected, co-opted and independent members including Town and Parish Councillors within the district's area. Meetings are usually held during the day and take place at the District Council's offices at . The Committee's role includes local determination of standards investigations as well as advising and raising awareness on issues relating to ethics and conduct.

If you are interested in playing a key role in enhancing local democracy and maintaining and enhancing standards and ethics in your local area, you are invited to apply for the position as an independent member of the Standards Committee. The Committee currently comprises .... members in total of which ... are independent and ... represent Parish Councils within the district with the remaining ... members being elected Members of the Council.

To be eligible to apply you should not: -

- Have been a Member or Officer at the Council or of a Parish or Town Council within the district within the last five years
- Be a relative or close friend of a Member or Officer at the District Council.

Ideally, you should have: -

- A keen interest in standards in public life
- A wish to serve the local community and uphold local democracy
- Demonstrate high standards of personal integrity
- Be objective, independent and impartial
- Have direct experience of implementing and upholding standards and/or dealing with complaints and customer care issues.

A small fixed annual allowance is payable together with travel and subsistence expenses.

For an information pack, please visit the Council's website

**The closing date for applications is .....**  
**Interviews will be held on .....**

## INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

### OPTION A

#### Selection Criteria

The ideal candidate for the position of independent member of the Standards Committee will have:-

1. A broad range of experience, preferably in public, private, voluntary or charitable sector employment or service including self-employed, employed and voluntary positions. (NOTE: need to ensure that this is not perceived as discriminatory as it may potentially exclude those who do not have experience in the workplace and young people who are less likely to have a broad range of experience).
2. Good analytical skills and be able to demonstrate clarity of thought. The ability to assimilate information quickly and arrive at balanced judgments.
3. Independence of mind, objectivity and impartiality.
4. Being a resident within the district.
5. A commitment to the general principles governing the conduct of Councilors generally and matters of probity and integrity in particular.
6. Good interpersonal skills, including good communication skills both written and oral and the ability to co-operate with others in a committee setting. Tact and diplomacy in handling sensitive matters.

Desirable additional criteria are: -

1. Experience of dealing with matters of the kind which may be the concern of the Standards Committee in other contexts.
2. Working knowledge / experience of local government or some other aspects of the public service and/or of large, complex organisations at a senior level and substantial awareness and understanding of the political process
3. Knowledge/ experience of procedures for meetings
4. A preference will be given to applications from residents within the district

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 assessment of application form and by interview.

NOTE:

1. Meetings will normally be held in the daytime but occasionally be held in the early evening and/or at short notice. The successful appointee will therefore need to be flexible in being able to attend such meetings on occasion at short notice.

NOTE: ELIGIBILITY FOR APPOINTMENT

2. A person who has: -

- within the last five years been a Member or Officer of the District Council or of any Town or Parish Council within the district
- or who is a relative or close friend of a Member or Officer of the Council

is not eligible to be an independent member of the Standards Committee and should not apply.



**INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE**  
**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

	Essential	Desirable
<b>Qualifications:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No specific qualifications or background is required</li> </ul>		
<b>Knowledge and Skills:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A good communicator with questioning skills</li> <li>Assertive</li> <li>Inquisitive, open-minded and non-judgemental</li> <li>Perception of the potential contribution of Independent Members appointed to the Committee</li> <li>Understanding of the Standards Committee's main functions</li> <li>General understanding of the principles behind the Members' Code of Conduct</li> <li>Awareness of the background to the introduction of the new ethical framework for local government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li></li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> <li>✓</li> <li></li> <li></li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
<b>Experience:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A demonstrable interest in local issues</li> <li>Experience in committee working/weighing evidence and dealing with ethical issues</li> <li>An interest in public service and local government in particular</li> <li>Live and/or work in the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> <li></li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li></li> <li></li> </ul>
<b>Competencies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A person in whose impartiality and integrity the public can have confidence</li> <li>Understand and comply with confidentiality requirements</li> <li>Able to make a significant contribution to the work of the committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>	
<b>Other requirements:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To formally agree to observe the Local Code of Conduct for Members including completing a Declaration of Financial and Other Interests. This register is available to be viewed by members of the public on request</li> <li>Able to attend approximately four/five programmed meetings and ad hoc if required, and devote preparation time for each meeting</li> <li>Must not be disqualified from standing for election as a councillor, ie been adjudged bankrupt or been sentenced to a term of imprisonment for a period of not less than three months in the past five years</li> <li>Must not currently have and must not enter into any contractual relations with the council under which he/she will gain personally</li> <li>Will have disclosed to the council any matter in his/her background which, if it became public, might cause the council to reconsider the appointment</li> <li>Will not be an active member of any political party or have a public profile in relation to political activities</li> <li>Will not have been an officer or a member of a principal council (ie a county, district or unitary council) within five years of the date of his/her written application</li> <li>Committed to the (four) year term of office</li> </ul>		

(Based on a pro forma from Buckinghamshire County Council)

## INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

### ROLE DESCRIPTION

**Responsible to:** The Standards Committee and to the Council

**Liaison with:** Members of the Standards Committee, Officers and Members of the District Council and of Town and Parish Councils within the District, Independent Members of the other Standards Committees, key stakeholders within the community.

1. To attend regularly and participate in meetings of the Standards Committee and any sub-committees (NOTE: meetings will normally be held during the daytime but may be held during the early evening and may occasionally be called at short notice).
2. To participate in and/or chair hearings in relation to complaints of member misconduct under the Code of Conduct.
3. To actively promote ethics and standards within the District Council and within Town and Parish Councils within the district area.
4. To develop and apply knowledge of the Code of Conduct in relation to matters brought before the Standards Committee, including the determination of allegations of member misconduct.
5. To analyse and exercise fair and impartial judgement on conduct issues and to set standards of ethical behaviour.
6. To provide a view on the governance of the Council from an external perspective which will better enable the Committee to advise the Council on conduct issues.
7. To develop a sound understanding of the ethical and wider regulatory framework within which the Council operates and to contribute to the overall effectiveness of the full scope of the work of the Committee.
8. To be aware of the views of the local community on ethical standards and to reflect these in the activities of the Committee
9. Be prepared to undertake training and to participate in training events organised by the committee to promote awareness of the Code of Conduct.
10. To attend meetings of the District Council and civic and other functions in order to raise the profile of ethics and standards within the authority.
11. In the absence of the Chairman, to participate in any forum established for independent Members of the Standards Committee.

## **INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

### **NOTES ON ELIGIBILITY**

#### **By regulations: -**

a person may not be appointed as an independent member of a Standards Committee of an authority or sub-committee of the Standards Committee unless the appointment is: -

- (a) approved by a majority of the Members of the authority;
- (b) advertised in one or more newspapers circulating in the area of the authority;
- (c) of a person who has submitted an application to the authority;
- (d) of a person who has not within the period of five years immediately preceding the date of the appointment been a Member or Officer of the authority and;
- (e) of a person who is not a relative or close friend of a Member or Officer of the authority.

[The Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) Regulations 2001: Statutory Instrument 2001 No. 2812]

#### **By primary legislation: -**

A person may not be appointed as an independent member of a Standards Committee if he/she is currently an Officer or Member of any relevant authority (including Town, Parish or District Councils).

[The Local Government Act 2000 Section 53 (4) (b)]

**APPLICATION FOR THE POSITION OF  
INDEPENDENT MEMBER  
OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Individuals who wish to be considered for the appointment as an Independent Member of the Standards Committee of Newark and Sherwood District 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 committee members. Please feel free to use a separate continuation page if you wish to expand upon your answer to any question outlined below.

**1. PERSONAL DETAILS:**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Postcode:**

**National Insurance Number:**

**Contact details:**

**Daytime Telephone Number:**

**Daytime Fax Number**

**E-mail Address:**

**2. QUALIFICATIONS**

(Please list in particular any qualifications which you think are relevant to the position of Independent Member of the Standards Committee)

**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 Member of the Standards Committee having regard to the selection criteria for the position)

**5. Why do you wish to be considered for membership of the Standards Committee and what particular attributes do you believe you would bring to the work of the Committee?**

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

**7. References will be taken up for all applicants who are invited for interview**

1. Name:	2 Name:
.....	.....
Address:	Address:
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
Telephone no. ....	Telephone no. ....

I wish to apply to be an Independent Member of the District Council’s Standards Committee.

In submitting this application, I declare that: -

- I am not and have not during the past five years been a Member or Officer of the District Council or of any Town or Parish Council within the district’s area
- I am not related to, or a close friend of, any Member or Officer of the District Council.
- I am not actively engaged in local party political activity.

Signed .....

Date .....

Please return this application form in the envelope provided by ... addressed to:

The Monitoring Officer  
Anywhere District Council

## **SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – OPTION A**

- 1. Introductions (Chair of Standards Committee)**
- 2. Are there any significant changes since the date of your application?**
- 3. What are your reasons for wanting to become a member of Newark & Sherwood District Council's Standards Committee?**

**OR**

- Why did the vacancy appeal to you?**
- 4. If appointed, how do you see yourself representing the public interest on the committee? How will you keep in touch with the views of the local community?**
- 5. What experience or knowledge do you have of local government or other public service and/or other large, complex organisation and how it works?**
- 6. What experience do you have of dealing with ethical or conduct issues or matters of propriety? What are your views about the standards of conduct within local government?**
- 7. How would you approach an allegation made to you in confidence about a breach of the Code of Conduct by an elected member of the Council?**
- 8. What skills and personal qualities will you bring to this role and why are they important?**
- 9. How would you deal with fellow members of the Standards Committee if you felt your position/views had not been recognised?**
- 10. Part of the Standards Committee's remit is to advise on training for members of district and parish councils. Do you have any experience which might be of value in this area?**
- 11. Another aspect of the Standards Committee's work is to consider and decide on the outcome of complaints relating to member conduct. Do you have any experience of participating in hearings, tribunals or similar bodies or of decision making where conflicting views/ evidence is presented?**

**OR**

- What experience do you have in exercising judgements in a fair and impartial manner?**
- 12. What experience do you have of dealing with confidential issues?**
- 13. Can you give an example of when you have had to make, or advise on, a difficult ethical question?**



- 14. What do you think should be the guiding principle of a councillor or an independent member?**
- 15. What benefits should this Committee bring to the Council or is it simply more bureaucracy?**
- 16. Because of the need to develop a feel as to how the council operates, do you have the commitment of time to attend meetings of the council other than Standards Committee meetings?**
- 17. Do you have any questions for us? (Chair of the Standards Committee)  
Many thanks etc**

**Possibly include:-**

**How do you think the committee could best promote its work within the Authority?**

**How do you think the committee could best promote its work to the public?**

## **SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – OPTION B**

### **1. Why have you applied for this position?**

#### Reason for question

To establish the commitment by, and interest of, the applicant.

### **2. How long have you lived/worked in the area and how do you involve yourself or inform yourself of local issues?**

#### Reason for question

Applicant should demonstrate an idea of the sense of the area as they are representing the “person on the street”.

### **3. Can you expand on the information in your application form which indicates your experience in matters of probity and/or with an ethical dimension?**

#### Reason for question

Applicant needs to demonstrate level of experience within these areas and gives Panel chance to probe further with supplementary questions.

### **4. Why do you think it is important for the Council to require these experiences from its External Members?**

#### Reason for question

Applicant needs to show that they have given the role some thought.

### **5. Can you give examples of when you have had to deal with complex documents and quickly assimilate a range of information?**

#### Reason for question

Applicant needs to show that they can cope with detail, understand it and come to a conclusion

### **6. Tell us about your knowledge/experience of local government?**

#### Reason for question

It would help if applicant had some knowledge of local government or showed a willingness to learn

### **7. Give an example of where you have worked as part of a team. What was your role in the team?**

#### Reason for question

Applicant needs to show that they are willing to work as part of a team on Standards Committee

### **8. Give an example of when you have had to speak with the press and/or public present.**

### **9. The job will involve meetings which may take place in the day or evening, there will be required reading and training. Are you willing to commit yourself to this?**

Any questions that you wish to ask?