

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE 22 MAY 2009
GENERAL PURPOSES GROUP 13 JULY 2009
REPORT OF MONITORING OFFICER

Suggested Criteria for Appointment of Independent Person to Standards Committee

Background/Introduction

1. The Standards Committee includes four independent co-opted members. Representation on the Standards Committee has increased recently to take account of the local filter.
2. The role of the independent member is to give public confidence and thus credibility to the deliberations of the Standards Committee – not only amongst Councillors but also amongst members of the general public. They need to have a local connection with and interest in the Borough, but not be so closely associated with the Parish or Borough Councils that they are seen to be compromised through this.

Procedure for appointing independent members

3. Having advertised the post, a selection panel (being a Sub-Group of the General Purposes Group) consisting of three Borough Councillors and an independent person of the Standards Committee (normally the Chair) will interview applicants. The Monitoring Officer will attend the interview to advise the panel. The panel will make a recommendation to the Council, which will make the final decision on an appointment. The period of appointment will be for a fixed period of three years, which may be renewable on one occasion. It would be helpful if the Council has adopted criteria to assist in the appointment process.

Eligibility Criteria

4. By law applicants will not be eligible for appointment if:
 - They have been a member or officer of the Council within a period of five years immediately preceding the date of the appointment; or
 - They are relative or close friend of a member or officer of the Council
 - They are a member or officer of another authority which has a Standard Committee

Selection Criteria

5. The following criteria are proposed as selection criteria against which Independent members will be assessed.

Applicants must:

- be prepared to give up time for, training and meetings
- have local connections, and either reside in the Borough or carry out the main part of their work in the Borough
- be prepared to contribute on a voluntary basis (other than the payment of a small annual allowance)
- agree to abide by the provisions of the Code of Conduct
- not hold significant office in a political party
- not have given financial support to a political party within five years of the date of appointment
- not have been convicted of an imprisonable offence
- not have been adjudged bankrupt
- not have a history of vexatious and/or frivolous complaints against Maidstone Borough Council or Members of the Borough or Parish Councils

Applicants should be able to demonstrate from their life experience and interview:

- Mature judgment: the ability to withhold forming a final view till all available evidence has been obtained and considered
- Common sense: the ability to distinguish what matters from what does not
- Strong ethical standards: both an appreciation and demonstration of the importance of high ethical standards in corporate or public life
- Communication skills: the ability to listen and understand what is being said to them and to respond thoughtfully and articulately
- Experience in working on committees, ideally including chairing meetings, would be an advantage

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members consider these criteria with a view of General Purposes Group adopting them.