

Independent Member - Audit and Standards Committee

Background Information

Staffordshire County Council is seeking to appoint an Independent Member to its Audit & Standards Committee to support it in delivering and promoting good governance. This role will attract an annual remuneration of £698.69 per annum. The appointment will be for a period of 4 years.

Prospective candidates are invited to apply for the position in the form of a letter and accompanying CV. Please say why you wish to be considered for the post of Independent Member and what you could offer the Council. Give brief details of your experience (e.g. employment / business / professional / voluntary / public service) and qualifications, and any other matter which you consider relevant to your suitability for appointment. Please also explain how you meet the role profile and person specification outlined in the application pack.

The declaration form must also be completed, signed and returned with the application.

The Council's Audit & Standards Committee is a key component of the Council's corporate governance framework, providing independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards within the Council. The Committee has wide ranging responsibilities reporting to the full Council on an annual basis. Its main purpose is to:

- an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.
- independent review of the Council's governance, risk management, control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes; and
- promote high standards of ethical behaviour by developing, maintaining and monitoring Codes of Conduct for Councillors and co-opted Members (including other persons acting in a similar capacity).

Role Description

- An independent member of the Audit & Standards Committee will be a general member of the public (i.e. a non-elected representative) recruited based on the suitability of their qualifications and experience. Ideally the independent member will bring to the committee a wide range of skills, possessing knowledge of financial controls and management, and/or governance, risk and audit matters. They will be part of the Committee in an advisory and consultative

capacity but will not have a vote unlike the elected members of the Committee who are entitled to vote.

- The appointed Independent Members will be expected to provide specialist knowledge and insight to the workings and deliberations of the Committee and to support the Committee in providing effective, independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework, an independent review of the Council's financial and non-financial performance, and in providing independent challenge to, and assurance over, the Council's internal control framework and wider governance processes.

Expectations of Independent Members

- Actively promote good governance, risk management and control in the delivery of the Council's functions.
- Attend and participate in formal Committee meetings, providing external challenge and support in relation to reports presented to the Committee. Each Independent Member will need to be available for up to eight meetings per year of the Audit & Standards Committee which will be held at County Buildings in Stafford, during normal office hours.
- Prepare for each meeting by reading the agenda papers and additional information to familiarise yourself with the issues under discussion and consider the questions you may wish to put to officers. To be available on occasions for email or telephone consultation.
- At the meetings ask questions in a way which is apolitical, non-judgemental and respects confidentiality.
- Keep up to date with key issues for the Council; to develop your understanding of the key priorities and initiatives being pursued.
- Contribute to achieving open, accountable and transparent local democracy in Staffordshire.
- To abide by the Council's Constitution and Members' Code of Conduct.

Eligibility For Appointment

A person cannot be appointed as an Independent Member if they have significant previous dealings with the Council which may compromise (or give the appearance of compromising) their impartiality and independence. Applicants must disclose to the Council any matter that might damage the reputation of the Council or indicate a real or perceived conflict of interest with the role of the Audit Committee.

In particular, you cannot be considered for appointment if you:

- Are a member of a local authority, or have been in the last five years, or are actively engaged in local party-political activity.

- Are an employee or consultant to the Authority or other partner organisation with which the Council has dealings and which might affect your impartiality.
- Are related to, or are a close friend/associate of, any Member or senior officer of the Council.
- A Member of Parliament

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- A Member of Parliament
- Previous experience of audit committees may be helpful but is not essential.

Independent Member Person Specification

The successful candidate will be able to demonstrate the following:

- Good advocacy skills: able to present relevant and well-reasoned arguments, and provide effective and constructive challenge
- Ability to set aside own views and always remain open-minded, objective, and impartial and act with integrity
- Ability to analyse, interpret and absorb information and evidence effectively and quickly
- Good communication and interpersonal skills; a confident public speaker
- Ability and willingness to challenge ideas and contribute positively to policy development
- Understanding the role of officers, members and other agencies and ability to have constructive and challenging dialogue with other Members and Officers
- Respect for, and desire to work with different groups and individuals with a commitment to supporting continual improvement and development within the Council
- Practical experience in financial management/accountancy within the public or private sector
- Understanding and compliance with confidentiality requirements

Behaviour and Code of Conduct

Whilst operating as a member of the Audit Committee, co-opted independent members are expected to follow the Nolan Principles of Standards in Public Life, which form the basis of the elected Member's Code of Conduct.

The details can be found at the attached link:

[Appendix 1 - Members Code of Conduct.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

[Appendix 2 - Members Code of Conduct Guidance Notes.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

