

## AGENDA ITEM: 11

### SUMMARY



<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Council</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> July 2012</b>
<b>PART:</b>	<b>I</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>THE LOCALISM ACT 2011 – APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON</b>
Contact:	Steven Baker, Assistant Director (Legal, Democratic & Regulatory) Directline: 01442 228229, internal extension: 2229 steve.baker@dacorum.gov.uk
Purpose of report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To advise Members of the requirement to appoint an Independent Person pursuant to the Localism Act, who must be consulted when the Council is dealing with standards complaints.</li><li>• To ask Council to consider the recommendation of the interview panel on the appointment of the Independent Person.</li></ul>
Recommendations	That Council- <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Appoints Joseph Norton as the Council's Independent Person for the purposes of section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 for a term of two years.</li><li>2. Appoints Amy Willcox as an independent member of the Standards Committee for a term of two years.</li></ol>

Corporate objectives:	The promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct by Members of the Council will assist the Council in achieving its priorities of performance excellence and reputation and profile delivery.
Implications: 'Value For Money Implications'	There are financial and efficiency costs to the Council in having to deal with complaints made under the Code of Conduct. There are, therefore, value for money benefits to the Council in striving to ensure that complaints against Members are minimised as far as possible and any complaints that are received are dealt with as cost effectively as possible.
Risk Implications	The risk to the Council in not having in place a robust local standards regime could damage its reputation for good governance and undermine public confidence in the Council as a whole.
Monitoring Officer	This is a report prepared by the Assistant Director (Legal, Democratic & Regulatory) in his capacity as Monitoring Officer.
Consultees:	None
Background papers:	Reports to Cabinet: 7th February 2012, 24th April 2012 Report to Standards Committee: 7th June 2012 Localism Act 2011

## BACKGROUND REPORT

1. This report follows directly on from the report at item 10 on the agenda. That report explained the requirement under the Localism Act for the Council to appoint an 'independent person' whose views have to be sought, and taken into account, before the Council decides what action should be taken against a member who has been found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct.
2. In accordance with the Localism Act, the role of independent person was advertised and six applications were received before the closing date on 27<sup>th</sup> June. Four candidates were shortlisted, but one shortlisted candidate withdrew their application. On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012 the three remaining candidates were interviewed by a panel consisting of Cllr Carol Green, Cllr Maureen Flint, Mrs Shelley Savage (former independent chair of the Standards Committee) and the Monitoring Officer.
3. After carefully evaluating the respective performances of the three candidates, the panel decided to recommend to Council that Joseph Norton be appointed to the role of independent person for a term of two years.
4. Mr Norton is a retired civil servant who has lived in Hemel Hempstead since 1959. Mr Norton was a founder member of Dacorum First Credit Union and is currently involved with the Town Centre Neighbourhood Action Group.

5. Amy Willcox was another of the three candidates who were interviewed for the role of independent person. Miss Willcox gave a creditable performance at interview and the panel considered that she would be a suitable appointment as one of the independent members of the Standards Committee. The Monitoring Officer subsequently discussed this with Miss Willcox and she indicated that she would be happy to serve as an independent member of the Standards Committee.
6. Miss Willcox (who is due to be married next week) is aged 28 and has lived in Dacorum for three years. She currently works for the Watford Community Housing Trust and has previous experience working for other local authorities.
7. The other of the three candidates interviewed for the role of independent person was also considered by the panel to be a suitable person to serve as an independent member, but she declined the invitation to have her name put forward.