

APPENDIX 6

DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

**INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF THE STANDARDS
COMMITTEE**

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

June 2015

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Dacorum Borough Council is looking to appoint two members of the public to serve as the independent members on the Council's Standards Committee to support the Council's arrangements for dealing with standards matters within the Borough Council and within the 16 Parish and Town Councils in the Borough.

The appointment of the independent members is a decision of full Council and the term of appointment is for a period of four years. Training will be provided on the work of the Standards Committee and the role of the independent members.

The Localism Act 2011 places a duty on all local authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct for elected councillors. This includes the requirement to have a Code of Conduct with which councillors must comply.

The Act also requires that authorities should have in place its own arrangements for dealing with complaints on breaches of the Code of Conduct by councillors, including councillors of the town and parish councils. The arrangements that Dacorum Borough Council have put in place include the appointment of a Standards Committee which must include two persons who are local residents but who are not elected councillors. The other members of the Standards Committee are five elected councillors from Dacorum Borough Council and two councillors from the Parish and Town Councils.

The Act also requires authorities to appoint someone as its Independent Person. The role of the Independent Person is different to that of the independent members of the Standards Committee. The Independent Person is not a member of the Standards Committee, but they must be consulted by the Committee when it is dealing with a specific complaint that a councillor has breached the Council's Code of Conduct.

The role of the Standards Committee is to conduct hearings into complaints of misconduct made against councillors which have been referred for investigation. The Standards Committee also has a general role of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct among all councillors.

Essential Qualities

The essential qualities for the position are that candidates should:

- Be over 18 years of age
- Have a commitment to public service
- Have personal integrity and have a commitment to upholding high standards
- Be independent and impartial
- Be able to critically assess written and oral evidence to reach balanced and objective decisions
- Possess tact, diplomacy and good communication skills

- Demonstrate excellent listening, problem solving and evaluation skills
- Be reliable and committed

Desirable Qualities

It would be desirable if candidates:

- Have a knowledge of how local government operates and an awareness of the role of councillors
- Demonstrate an active interest in their local community

Eligibility Criteria

Candidates must live in the Borough of Dacorum.

It is important that candidates are independent of the Borough Council and the Parish and Town Councils in the area. Candidates, therefore, should not:

- Be or have been within the last five years, an elected or co-opted member or an officer of the Borough Council or of any of the Town and Parish Councils within the Borough.
- Be a relative or close friend of a current elected councillor or co-opted member or officer of the Borough Council or any Town and Parish Council within the Borough.
- Be or have been in the past, actively involved in party politics. This would include holding a position of office, such as membership of the management committee of a political party, or of a committee which selects candidates to contest local government or national or european elections, or acting as a candidate's agent. It would also include activities which are intended to garner public support for a political party, such as canvassing and delivering party political leaflets.

The Council reserves the right to remove an independent member from the Standards Committee if their independence is in anyway compromised, and/or they bring the reputation of the Council into disrepute.

Expenses

Independent members will receive travel expenses.

Time Commitment

The expected time commitment will depend on the number of complaints received . However, the time commitment is not expected to be significant as, historically, the number of complaints received in Dacorum has been low. The Standards Committee meets four times a year. Meetings are held in the evenings and start at 7.30 pm.

Application

You should complete **no more than** the attached application form which will be acknowledged upon receipt. (You are not required to submit a CV).

Applications should be received by no later than Monday 29 June 2015 and be sent by post to:

Steve Baker
Assistant Director (Chief Executive's Unit)
Civic Centre
Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1HH

Or sent by email to steve.baker@dacorum.gov.uk

Selection

Short listing for interview will be based upon an assessment of how candidates meet the essential and desirable qualities referred to above on the basis of the information given in the application form.

It is suggested, therefore, that you include information on how you consider you meet the essential and desirable qualities.

Selection will be through interview conducted by an interview panel and the decision to appoint following recommendation by the interview panel will be made by a full Council meeting.

Role Description

To give his/her views at meetings of the Standards Committee to assist the Committee in carrying out its functions, which include –

- Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors.
- Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the councillor's Code of Conduct.
- Receiving investigation reports into allegations of misconduct made against councillors.
- Assessing the operation and effectiveness of the councillor's Code of Conduct.
- Advising, training or arranging to train councillors on matters relating to the Code of Conduct.

- Hearing and determining complaints of misconduct about councillors.
- Maintaining oversight of the Council's arrangements for dealing with complaints.
- Informing Council of relevant issues arising from the determination of Code of Conduct complaints.
- Report, with recommendations, to the Council and to the Cabinet on issues relating to councillors' standards within the Council.

Further enquiries

If you would like to know more about what is involved being an independent member of the Standards Committee you can contact Steve Baker by email steve.baker@dacorum.gov.uk or by telephone 01442 228229.