

***Localism Act 2011 –
Appointment of
Independent Persons***

LOCALISM ACT 2011 – APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS

Report of the Head of Law and Governance

1. The Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to appoint at least one independent person whose views must be sought and taken into account before the Standards Committee makes a decision in respect of an allegation against a Member which has been investigated.

The independent person's views may also be sought by a Member who is the subject of a misconduct complaint.

2. At its meeting on 28 March 2012, Council resolved to appoint two independent persons, each for a term of two years, with provision to extend for a further three years without re-advertising.
3. The posts were advertised in a joint advertisement issued on behalf of the Tyne and Wear Authorities and Northumberland County Council. A panel drawn from the Standards Committee considered the applications and interviewed candidates and has recommended that the Council appoint Mr Anthony Atkinson and Mrs Sheeba Joseph to the posts.
4. Mr Atkinson is a retired accountant who undertakes a number of voluntary roles in the community including serving as a school governor and member of a schools appeal panel, together with voluntary work associated with the National Trust property, Gibside and with Pets as Therapy. He is a Trustee/Director of Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council. Under the pre-July 2012 Standards regime, he served as the Independent Chair of Gateshead Council's Standards Committee and as an Independent Member of the Integrated Transport Authority Standards and Audit Committee. Mr Atkinson also served as a Magistrate between 1995 and 2008 and between 2008 to 2009 he was employed part-time as a Parish Council Clerk, obtaining a certificate in Local Council Administration. He is a former local director of Vaux Group plc and credits Vaux with encouraging his initial involvement in community work.
5. Mrs Joseph is a teacher, having gained her teaching qualification in 1995. Prior to this she worked for 14 years in the financial services sector in banking, insurance and with a chartered accountancy firm. Mrs Joseph has been involved in regulatory work since 2009, previously with the General Teaching Council of England (GTCE) and more recently with the Teaching Agency. While she was a member of the GTCE, she was actively involved in sitting on regulatory panels, working as the lead member for continuing professional development and teacher training and delivering advocacy sessions to student

teachers. She has experience of working with investigative committees when allegations have been made against teachers and currently serves as a Professional Conduct Panel Member, sitting on hearing panels which determine such allegations.

6. Recommendation

That the Council appoint Mr Anthony Atkinson and Mrs Sheeba Joseph to the posts of independent persons, pursuant to the requirements of the Localism Act 2011, for a period of two years, with provision for the Council to extend for a further period of three years, without re-advertising the posts.