

COUNCIL

15 SEPTEMBER 2021

APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to a number of proposed changes to various committees and outside bodies that have arisen since the last Council meeting.
- 1.2 The full list of appointments to committees and outside bodies will be published on the Council's website in the Year Book at <https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/committees/cm15/PublicDocuments.aspx> following the meeting.

2.0 Changes to Appointments on Committees

- 2.1 Notification has been received from Councillors Bewick, Jenkins and Mann that they had resigned as members of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and dissolved their Group on the Council. Councillor Mann has subsequently joined the Conservative Group and Councillors Bewick and Jenkins have advised that they will continue to serve their Wards as a newly formed Wearside Independents Group.
- 2.2 These changes have given rise to a review of the political balance of the Council to ensure places on Committees are allocated in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements.
- 2.3 The resultant changes required are as follows:-
 - **Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee** – the seat held by the former UKIP Group is allocated to the Conservative Group;
 - **Planning and Highways Committee (East)** – the seat held by the former UKIP Group is allocated to the Liberal Democrats Group;
 - **Planning and Highways Committee (West)** – the seat held by the former UKIP Group is allocated to the Conservative Group;
 - **Licensing and Regulatory Committee** - the seat held by the former UKIP Group is allocated to the Wearside Independents Group;

- **Homelessness Appeals Panel** – one seat held by the Liberal Democrat Group is allocated to the Wearside Independents Group; and
- **Appeals Committee** - the seat held by the former UKIP Group is allocated to the Wearside Independents Group.

3.0 Appointment of Independent Person

- 3.1 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 complaint.
- 3.2 At its meeting on 20 September 2017, the Council appointed Mr Dennis Hall to the post for a period of two years from 1 October 2017, with provision for the Council to extend the appointment on two subsequent occasions (i.e. 6 years in total). Mr Hall's appointment was subsequently extended for a further period of two years from 1 October 2019. The allowance payable for the post (which does not form part of the Members' Allowances Scheme) is set at £1,000 per annum plus reasonable travel and subsistence expenses and it is proposed that this continues.
- 3.3 Mr Hall is a retired local government solicitor and former monitoring officer, with extensive knowledge and experience of local government. He has provided valuable input and support to the Standards Committee and it is therefore recommended that his period of office be extended by a further period of two years from 1 October 2019.

4.0 Additions and Changes to Outside Bodies

Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group

- 4.1 The Council has been invited to nominate an elected member representative and an officer representative to the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group which is open to all members of the LGA. It currently has a membership of 57 coastal local authorities from around England and covers 59% of the English coast.
- 4.2 The LGA Coastal SIG exists to champion and represent the collective interests of the coastal communities by increasing awareness and debate on environmental, economic and social issues at all levels in relation to the coast. It works in partnership with other organisations with complementary aims and brings pressure on the Government to secure local government's full involvement at all levels of policy formulation concerning the coast.

- 4.3 The LGA Coastal SIG meets 4 times per year. All nominated Member and officer representatives are invited to attend. These meetings are attended by representatives from relevant government departments (e.g. Defra, MHCLG) and provide a direct line to government. The SIG also attracts a varied programme of external speakers, including an Executive Director of the Environment Agency and the Chief Officer of the Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities.
- 4.4 Council is therefore requested to appoint an elected member representative and the Flood and Coastal Group Engineer from the City Development Directorate as the officer representative to the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group.

North East Combined Authority (NECA) Audit and Standards Committee

- 4.5 The Council was notified by the Monitoring Officer at NECA that the political balance calculations had been reviewed and this had highlighted the need to revise committee membership of the NECA Audit and Standards Committee. Sunderland was requested to nominate a Conservative Member and substitute to the Committee in place of the current Labour representative Cllr Stewart with Cllr J Price as Substitute.
- 4.6 At Annual Council, authorisation was given to the Assistant Director of Law and Governance to make any necessary changes to appointments should any external organisation inform the Council that any Council representative(s) must be from a particular political group in order to comply with that organisation's constitution or other governing document, or, should any notification be received that a nominated member is ineligible for appointment under the organisation's constitution or governing document, in accordance with notification(s) received from the relevant group leader(s) or their representatives and notify Council members accordingly.
- 4.7 Council is therefore requested to note that Councillor Mullen, with Councillor Doyle as his substitute, has been nominated to the NECA Audit and Standards Committee.

5.0 Positions as Trustees on the Samuel Dobson and Victoria House Trusts

- 5.1 A vacancy for a Councillor representative exists on both the Samuel Dobson Trust and the Victoria House Trust previously held by former Councillor Turner.
- 5.2 Council is therefore requested to appoint to the resultant vacancies.

6.0 Recommendations

The Council is accordingly invited to:-

- (i) appoint a Conservative Group Member to the seat on the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held by the former UKIP Group;
- (ii) appoint a Liberal Democrat Group Member to the seat on the Planning and Highways Committee (East) held by the former UKIP Group;
- (iii) appoint a Conservative Group Member to the seat on the Planning and Highways Committee (West) held by the former UKIP Group;
- (iv) appoint a Wearside Independents Group Member to the seat on the Licensing and Regulatory Committee held by the former UKIP Group
- (v) appoint one seat currently held by the Liberal Democrat Group on the Homelessness Appeals Panel to the Wearside Independents Group;
- (vi) appoint a Wearside Independents Group Member to the seat on the Appeals Committee held by the former UKIP Group;
- (vii) extend the period of appointment of Mr Dennis Hall as Independent Person as set out in the report, for an additional period of two years from 1 October 2021;
- (viii) appoint an elected member representative and the Flood and Coastal Group Engineer from the City Development Directorate as the officer representative to the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group;
- (ix) note that Councillor Mullen, with Councillor Doyle as his substitute, has been nominated to the NECA Audit and Standards Committee;
- (x) appoint an elected member representative to the Samuel Dobson Trust; and
- (xi) appoint an elected member representative to the Victoria House Charity.