

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO THE AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

INFORMATION PACK

Introduction

Our Audit and Standards Committee currently comprises 6 county councillors (4 conservative, 1 labour and 1 liberal democrat) and up to 2 independent members.

The existing independent member chairs the committee. We currently have a vacancy for the other independent member.

The committee meets approximately four times a year. On average the meetings generally last between 2-3 hours although this may vary depending on the business to be conducted at each meeting.

Meetings of the committee are generally open to the press and public but it may consider certain items in private subject to certain legislative requirements.

The committee seeks to work by achieving a consensus view on the matters it discusses. Although the independent members may participate in discussions they do not as co-opted (appointed) members have a formal vote.

An independent member may be appointed for an initial fixed term of up to four years and thereafter for such period as the Council considers appropriate. Any appointment must be confirmed by a majority of the full Council before it can take effect. It is important given the work of the Committee that an independent member has the confidence of the full Council.

All independent members must give an undertaking to abide by the Warwickshire County Council Member Code of Conduct prior to taking up their appointment. They must also comply with requirements to register certain financial interests in a register which is open to public inspection.

About the Council

Our Vision for Warwickshire

To make Warwickshire the best it can be, sustainable now and for future generations

The vision guides the setting of our priorities, policies and the allocation of resources. These are set out in more detail in the Council Plan 2025

Our priority outcomes

Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent

We will

- Support our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, providing early support, before situations become complex
- Support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged adults in Warwickshire to enjoy life; achieve and live independently
- Support Warwickshire residents to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and reduce the need for hospital or long term health care
- Work with communities to promote safety, prevent harm and reduce crime and disorder across Warwickshire

Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure

We will

- Support communities and businesses to develop the digital skills and tools they need in an increasingly digital economy
- Increase reuse, recycling and composting rates and reduce waste across Warwickshire
- Support and enable children and young people to access a place in a high quality education setting and achieve their full potential
- Attract economic investment and maximise the rate of employment, business growth and skill levels in Warwickshire
- Manage and maintain Warwickshire's transport network in a safe, sustainable and integrated way

Making the best use of resources

We will

- Put our resources in the right place to support the organisation's priorities and balance the books
- Develop our workforce so that it has the right skills and capabilities to get the job done Pursue leadership excellence and high performance at all levels
- Reduce demand and reduce cost through innovative service design and focussed prevention interventions
- Make it easy for customers to access our information and services so they have a positive experience of our services
- As part of our response to climate change, we make sure our work is in-line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals

How we are organised

There are 57 elected county councillors, each representing an electoral division in Warwickshire. Collectively they are known as the Council and they meet together at least 6 times a year. The Council decides what the main plans and policies of the Council should be and sets the annual budget.

Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their electoral division. The overriding duty of the Councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

The County Council has a constitution which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made, who makes decisions, how others can participate and how the procedures which are followed to ensure that the Council is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

The County Council operates by means of a number of Committees. The main Committees are:-

- Cabinet (the executive) – this consists of the leader of the Council and up to 9 other County Councillors appointed annually by the Leader. The Cabinet is responsible for most day-to-day decisions taken by the Council. The Cabinet must make decisions in line with the Council's overall policies and budget. The Cabinet usually meets in public unless personal or confidential matters are to be discussed.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committees – these Committees support the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole by reviewing the development of policies and services and scrutinising how well the Council is performing.
- The Audit and Standards Committee – the roles and functions of this Committee are set out above.
- Regulatory Committee – this Committee deals primarily with planning applications, licensing and arrangements for various types of appeals. It also deals with most of the appointments that the Council makes to outside bodies.
- Staff and Pensions Committee deals with staffing matters and the administration of the Warwickshire Local Government and Fire and Rescue Service Pension Funds.

The Council has officers (employees) working for it to give advice, implement decisions and manage the day-to-day delivery of services. Council staff are led by the Chief Executive and organised into three Directorates i.e. Resources, People and Communities each headed by a Strategic Director.

The Code of Conduct for Councillors and co-opted members

Under the Local Government Act 2000, Councils are required to adopt a code of conduct for members and co-opted members. The Audit and Standards Committee has a specific role to advise on and monitor the operation of the code of conduct.

Warwickshire County Council adopted its code of conduct on 12th July 2012. All members and co-opted members are required to observe the code of conduct when conducting the Council's business or acting as the Council's representative.

The code of conduct contains a number of general obligations (Nolan principles on standards of conduct in public life) which members must abide by. These include an obligation to promote equality, treat others with respect, not to do anything which

compromises the impartiality of employees (officers) or which could bring the Council into disrepute.

The Code also requires members to record their financial interests and those of their spouse or partner in public registers that the Council is required to maintain.

There are also rules about when members should declare conflicts of interests before participating in Council business and the circumstances in which they should take no part in Council business because of a conflict of interests.

A copy of the current Code of Conduct is included in the information pack.

Role of the Committee

In Warwickshire the Audit and Standards Committee has two distinct roles i.e.

As an Audit Committee to provide

- a) independent assurance about the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment
- b) independent scrutiny of the authority's financial and non-financial performance
- c) oversight of the financial reporting process

As a Standards Committee to

- (a) promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted members of the Council
- (b) assist Councillors and co-opted members of the Council to observe the Council's code of conduct through training, advice etc
- (c) advise the Council on changes to the code of conduct;
- (d) monitor the operation of the Council's code of conduct

Eligibility

We are looking for someone who is independent of the County Council and is not politically active to serve as an independent member of the Committee. This means that you can only apply for this position if you meet the following criteria

- you are aged over 18
- you are not currently a councillor or an officer of any district or borough council in Warwickshire
- you have not been a member or employee of Warwickshire County Council within the past 5 years
- you are not a close friend or relative of a Warwickshire County Councillor or Warwickshire County Council employee
- You are not a politically active member of a political party

Person Specification

You must be able to demonstrate the following:

- A broad range of experience, preferably in public, private, voluntary or charitable sector including self-employed, employed and voluntary positions.
- An understanding of local government and local democracy
- Good analytical skills and be able to demonstrate clarity of thought. The ability to assimilate information quickly, identify key issues, weigh evidence and reach balanced decisions.
- Independence of mind, objectivity, impartiality and a high level of personal integrity.
- An understanding of probity, the general principles of the code of conduct and issues surrounding standards of conduct and ethics in public life.
- Good interpersonal skills, including good communication skills both written and oral and the ability to co-operate with others in a committee setting. Tact and diplomacy in handling sensitive matters. Good questioning skills.
- Knowledge of the geographical area of Warwickshire and its diverse communities.

Desirable additional criteria are: -

- Experience of dealing with matters of the kind which will be the concern of the Audit and Standards Committee in other contexts.
- Working knowledge / experience of local government or some other aspects of the public service and/or of large, complex organisations at a senior level and awareness and understanding of the political process .
- Knowledge/ experience of procedures for meetings
- Leadership skills

You should demonstrate in your application how you meet the above criteria as this will assist the short listing process.

TO BE COMPLETED ONCE APPOINTED

Member Code of Conduct

Warwickshire County Council

I

.....of.....
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..... **being a duly elected Councillor/Co-opted Member for Warwickshire County Council hereby declare that I will undertake my duties as follows:**

1. I will represent the interests of the whole community and work constructively with our staff and partner organisations to secure better social, economic and environmental outcomes for all.

2. As a holder of public office and as required by law I will behave in a manner that is consistent with the following principles to achieve best value for all our residents and maintain public confidence in the Council, any other body to which I am appointed by the Council and the office of councillor:

a. SELFLESSNESS: I will act solely in terms of the public interest. I will not act in such a way as to gain financial or other material benefits for myself, my family, or my friends.

b. INTEGRITY: I will not place myself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence me in the performance of my official duties.

c. OBJECTIVITY: I will make choices on merit, in carrying out public business, including when making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits

d. ACCOUNTABILITY: I will be accountable for my decisions and actions to the public and to the Council and must submit myself to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to my office.

e. OPENNESS: I will be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions I take. I will give reasons for my decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest or the law clearly demands.

f. HONESTY: I will declare any private interests relating to my public duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interests.

g. LEADERSHIP: I will promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

3. As a Member of the Council I will act in accordance with the principles in paragraph 2 and, in particular, I will

- a. Champion the needs of the whole community and all my constituents, including those who did not vote for me - and put the public interest first.
- b. Deal with representations or enquiries from residents, members of our communities and visitors fairly, appropriately and impartially.
- c. Not allow other pressures, including the financial interests of myself or others connected to me, to deter me from pursuing constituents' casework, the interests of the Council or the good governance of the Council in a proper manner.
- d. Exercise independent judgement and not compromise my position by placing myself under obligations to outside individuals or organisations who might seek to influence the way I perform my duties as a Member/Co-opted Member of the Council.
- e. Take account of all relevant information, including advice from statutory and other professional officers. I will remain objective and make decisions on merit.
- f. Be accountable for my decisions and cooperate when scrutinised internally and externally, including by local residents.
- g. Contribute to ensuring that decision-making processes are as open and transparent as possible to make sure the community understands the reasoning behind decisions and are informed when holding me and other Members to account.
- h. Behave in accordance with all my legal obligations, alongside any requirements contained within the Council's policies, protocols and procedures, including on the use of the Council's resources. I will not disclose confidential information without authority or where the law requires it.
- i. Value my colleagues and staff and engage with them in an appropriate manner and one that underpins the mutual respect between us that is essential to good local government.
- j. Always treat people with respect, including the organisations and public I engage with, fellow members and those I work alongside.
- k. Provide leadership through behaving in accordance with these principles when championing the interests of the community with other organisations as well as within this Council.

4. I will register and disclose those interests that I am required by law to declare. I will complete and submit a signed declaration of my interests to the Monitoring

Officer. I will keep the register updated and acknowledge that its contents are open to the public to inspect.

- 5. I will comply with any code of conduct for members that is properly established by the Council

Signed:.....

Full name:

Date: