

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 14th JULY 2010

**APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO
THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE HEAD,
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

1.

Summary

- 1.1 This report recommends the appointment of two persons as Independent Members of the Council's Standards Committee.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the following persons be appointed as Independent Members of the Standards Committee, each to serve a three year term of office expiring on the date of the Annual Council meeting in May 2013, subject to annual confirmation by the Council:-

- Ms Sue Rossiter (new appointment); and
- Mr Patrick (Barry) O'Connor (re-appointment)

3. Background

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement that local authority standards committees must include Independent Members who are neither Members nor officers of the Council or of another relevant authority. Standards for England recognises that Independent Members are important in helping to increase public confidence in local government and provide a clear signal that the Standards Committee acts fairly and impartially. They also bring a wider perspective from their outside experience.
- 3.2 Independent Members must form at least 25% of the Committee's membership but beyond this the Council may decide how many to appoint and how long they should serve for. An Independent Member must chair the Committee.
- 3.3 Tower Hamlets Council has decided there shall be a majority of Independent Members on the Standards Committee. The membership of the Committee was increased from May 2008 following the introduction of the local assessment of complaints and now includes five Councillors and

nine Independent Members. The Independent Members each serve a three year term and retire by rotation to ensure continuity of knowledge and experience. A retiring Independent Member may apply to serve an additional term or terms. Persons appointed undergo training on the Code of Conduct and other matters before taking up their place.

4. Existing Independent Members

4.1 Recruitment of Independent Members has taken place at regular intervals as vacancies have occurred either as a result of retirements or the expansion of the Committee's membership in response to its developing role. An advertisement in spring 2009 resulted in the appointment, at the Council Meeting on 20 May 2009, of four new Independent Members and during the municipal year 2009/10 nine Independent Members have served on the Committee as follows:-

- Mr Barry O'Connor (Chair) (term of office to May 2010);
- Mr Ibrahim Ali (to May 2011);
- Ms Salina Bagum (to May 2012);
- Ms Suzette Barry (to May 2010);
- Mr Richard Hopkins (to May 2012);
- Mr Barry Lowe (to May 2012);
- Mr Eric Pemberton (to May 2011);
- Mr Muhammad Habibur Rahman (to May 2010); and
- Mr Matthew Rowe (to May 2012)

4.2 As set out above, three of the Independent Members – Mr Barry O'Connor, Ms Suzette Barry and Mr Muhammad Habibur Rahman - reached the end of their respective terms of office in May 2010.

4.3 Ms Barry has indicated that she does not wish to seek a further term as a member of the committee. Suzette Barry has served on the Standards Committee since 2004 and the Committee Members have placed on record their thanks and appreciation for the significant contribution that she has made to the work of the Committee during that period.

5. Proposed appointments

5.1 An advertisement has been published and a recruitment process held to identify suitable persons for appointment to the vacant positions created by the retirement of the above members.

5.2 Statutory rules apply to the appointment of Independent Members and the Standards Board for England has also issued guidance to ensure that appointees are chosen in a fair and open way. The position(s) must be advertised publicly and no one may be appointed unless they have applied for the appointment. The following may not be appointed as an Independent Member of the Council's Standards Committee:-

- Someone who has been a Member or employee of the Council within 5 years before the date of the appointment;

- A Member or officer of the Council or another relevant authority; or
- A close friend or relative of a Member or employee of the Council.

5.3 The Standards Board for England has set out the following skills and competences that Independent Members should demonstrate:

- A keen interest in standards in public life;
- A wish to serve the local community and uphold local democracy;
- High standards of personal integrity;
- The ability to be objective, independent and impartial;
- Sound decision making skills;
- Questioning skills;
- Leadership qualities, particularly in respect of exercising sound judgement; and
- The ability to act as a chair of an assessment or review sub-committee or a determination hearing.

5.4 As far as possible the Council would wish to achieve a diversity of representation amongst the Independent Members in relation to gender and ethnicity; and has previously sought to recruit persons with experience in a range of different sectors i.e. academic/public, business and community.

5.5 The closing date for applications in the current recruitment round was 25th June 2010. Following assessment of the applications against the selection criteria, interview of the new applicant by an officer panel chaired by the Monitoring Officer and consultation with the respective group leaders, the following persons are recommended for appointment:-

<u>Name</u>	<u>Experience/Background</u>
Ms Sue Rossiter	(New applicant): Deputy Chief Executive of a trade association. Background in public policy relating to regulation. Active in the voluntary sector in the borough and trustee of a local charity.
Mr Barry O'Connor	(Application for a further term): Chair of the Independent Monitoring Board at a high security prison in London; and Chair of Trustees for a pension fund. Business consultant and broad previous commercial experience culminating in directorship of a public company. Has chaired the Standards Committee since 2005.

5.6 It is necessary for the appointment of Independent Members to be agreed by a majority of the total number of Members of the Council.

5.7 The final position on the Committee remains vacant and this will be the subject of a further report to the Council in due course.

6. Observations of the Chief Financial Officer

- 6.1 The Council's Scheme of Members Allowances provides for an Independent Member of the Standards Committee to claim a co-optee's allowance of £117 for attendance at any meeting of the Committee or a conference or training event where attendance is on behalf of and authorised by the Council. An Independent Member may also claim travel and subsistence allowance under the scheme.
- 6.2 Any payments made under 6.1 above will be met from within the existing budget provision for Members' Allowances held by Democratic Services.

7. Concurrent Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal)

- 7.1 The legal implications are included in the main body of this report.

8. Implications for One Tower Hamlets

- 8.1 The Independent members of the Standards Committee are drawn from a range of communities represented within the borough.

9. Anti-Poverty Implications

- 9.1 There are no anti-poverty implications arising from this report.

10. Risk Management Implications

- 10.1 The Standards Committee plays a key role in ensuring the adequacy of the Council's Governance arrangements and ethical and assurance framework.

11. Sustainable Action for a Greener Environment

- 11.1 There are no SAGE implications arising from this report.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)
LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT**

Brief description of "background paper"	Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection
None.	