

**STANDARDS APPOINTMENTS TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7 pm on 2 APRIL 2012**

Present: Councillors C Cant, S Favell, T Knight and M Lemon.

Officers in attendance: R Dobson (Democratic Services Officer) and M Perry
(Assistant Chief Executive – Legal).

SA1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor Knight was elected Chairman.

SA2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest.

SA3 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS

Members considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive-Legal which informed Members of the requirements relating to the appointment of independent persons under the Localism Act 2011 and sought Members' views on how best to recruit satisfactory candidates.

Members felt the way in which the appointments were advertised would be an important factor in encouraging interest from potential applicants. The advertisement needed to be interesting and meaningful to the lay person.

The Assistant Chief Executive-Legal advised on the changes in legislation regarding advertising for Independent Members, in that there was no obligation to advertise in the local press, but only to advertise in the way the authority felt best.

Members discussed where an advert should appear. It was felt that an advertisement should be placed both on the Council's website and in at least one local newspaper covering a large area of the district. As there was no budget allocated for this purpose, Members felt an advert should be run in conjunction with a press release or article to minimise advertising costs. Regarding these points the Assistant Chief Executive-Legal suggested seeking the input of colleagues with press communications experience.

The Assistant Chief Executive-Legal explained the position regarding possible applications from the existing independent members. He said the Government was changing the legislation to enable any independent members who had been co-opted within the last five years to be appointed provided the appointment was made within 12 months. However, this amendment was not yet in effect, therefore under current rules, the new independent persons needed to be in place by 1 July 2012.

Members considered and approved the person specification.

The wording of the advertisement was discussed and agreed as follows: 'This is your opportunity to help maintain and comment upon District, Parish and Town councillors' conduct. Uttlesford District Council is seeking to appoint three independent persons to its Standards Committee. An appointment description, application form, person specification and details of allowances are available on request.'

Other points discussed were: that a covering letter for the application form should be 'user friendly'; the letter should include a reference to training and to the fact that interviews would be conducted by a panel; a draft code of conduct should be made available to candidates; and the appointment should be advertised to ensure it was available to minority groups and those who were disabled. The Chairman said she would speak to the relevant officer.

The application form as previously used was approved.

It was agreed that following receipt of applications, these should be shortlisted.

Interview questions were considered, and the questions supplied in the report papers were amended to delete questions 4 and 9, and to include a question asking the candidates 'What are the benefits of having a Standards Committee?' It was agreed that questions should be allocated to the various members of the panel. The questions asked should be identical for each candidate in order to be fair, although an interviewee could be asked to expand on the answers they gave.

The possibility of an interim appointment was considered, but in view of the fact that the new regime had to be in place by 1 July, Members felt it was important to progress the substantive application process as swiftly as possible and to call an extraordinary meeting of Council to deal with the recommendation from the Task Group once the selection process had concluded.

SA4

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Dates were scheduled as follows:

Date of next meeting to shortlist applicants: **Tuesday 15 May at 6pm** before Full Council.

Dates for interviews (rooms to be booked provisionally for all day and evening): **Tuesday 22 and Wednesday 23 May.**

The meeting ended at 8.40pm.