

**INDEPENDENT
MEMBERS OF THE
STANDARDS
COMMITTEE –**

APPLICATION PACK

Pursuing High Ethical Standards in Harrow

Can you help set the standard on ethics and probity?

Are you interested in promoting high levels of standards and ethics in local government? Assistance from members of the community is needed to help oversee the standards for the conduct of Members of the Council.

The London Borough of Harrow is seeking 4 members of the public to become independent members of the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee oversees the delivery of high standards of behaviour by Councillors and advises on good practice in relation to ethics and probity.

The Standards Committee

The Committee consists of 6 Councillors and 4 independent members who are not Councillors. The Committee advises the Council on the Code of Conduct for all Councillors and co-opted members, is responsible for promoting and developing high standards of conduct, provide and organise training, and consider complaints against Councillors.

Criteria

To be considered for the position of independent member you must be able to demonstrate:

- an independent and analytical mind
- tact and good interpersonal skills
- ability to give clear and reasoned advice

In addition, you should not:

- be a Councillor or employee of any Council
- have a contractual, legal relationship or close personal relationship with the Council, any Councillor or an employee of the Council.
- be a member of a political party.

The Council provides a basic allowance of £445 per annum for this role. Short discussion sessions with shortlisted applicants will be held by members of a Selection Panel formed of Councillors of the Standards Committee. This Selection Panel will then recommend to Council those candidates who it believes are suitable. Final appointments will be agreed by Council meeting in May 2010.

Contact Information

If you believe you have the experience and personal qualities to undertake this role, and would like to complete an application form, please either visit our website: www.harrow.gov.uk, email vishal.seegoolam@harrow.gov.uk or write to Vishal Seegoolam, Democratic Services, Harrow Council, PO Box 2, Civic Centre, Harrow, HA1 2UH. If you would like to discuss the role please contact Vishal Seegoolam on 020 8424 1883.

The closing date for the receipt of applications is 26 February 2010.

FURTHER INFORMATION

London Borough of Harrow

Harrow is an outer London Borough in northwest London and approximately 10 miles from central London. Covering 50 square kilometres (20 square miles) Harrow is the 12th largest borough in Greater London in terms of area, but 22nd in terms of size of population. It is also one of the most diverse boroughs in the UK.

Council Structure

The London Borough of Harrow is divided into 21 wards, each represented by 3 Councillors.

Currently the Conservative party has overall control of the Council with 35 seats out of 63.

- Conservatives: 35 seats
- Labour: 24 seats
- Liberal Democrats: 2 seats
- Independent: 2 seats

The Harrow Council officer structure comprises 6 directorates of:

- Adults' & Housing Services
- Children's Services
- Community & Environment Services
- Finance
- Place Shaping
- Legal and Governance Services

plus a Chief Executive's Department.

Purpose and Role of the Standards Committee

All Councils are required to set up a Standards Committee to oversee high standards of conduct. The size of the Committee is a matter for local choice, but, whatever the size, at least 25% of the membership of the Committee must consist of independent members, selected after open advert in the Council's area. The purpose of this is to strengthen the public perception of the independence and effectiveness of the Committee. In Harrow, the Standards Committee comprises 6 Councillors and 4 Independent Members. An Independent Member will be appointed as the Chairman of the Standards Committee. This is a legal requirement.

The Committee will have a number of functions:

- to advise the Council on the revision of the Members Code of Conduct
- to be responsible for promoting and developing high standards of conduct
- to provide and organise training

- to consider reports about complaints against Councillors

Investigations Conducted by the Standards Committee

The Standards Committee is required to consider allegations that a Member or Co-opted Member of the authority has failed, or may have failed to comply with the Authority's Code of Conduct. The Standards Committee has established sub-committees to deal with these functions and you may be required to sit on these sub-committees occasionally.

Frequency of Standard Committee Meetings

It is anticipated that the Committee will meet a minimum of 4 times per year. Committee meetings in Harrow generally start at 7.30pm and may last a couple of hours. Meetings will be open to the public unless a confidential or exempt item of business is being discussed.

Procedure for Selection of Independent Members

The Council will advertise in its area for Independent Members of the Standards Committee. People who are interested in applying will be asked to complete an application form.

A Selection Panel of Councillors will consider all applications and shortlisted candidates will be invited to meet the Panel for a short discussion about the role. After meeting with applicants, the Panel will select the 4 applicants it wishes to see appointed to the Standards Committee. The Selection Panel may also recommend the appointment of reserve members, who will only be required to sit on the Standards Committee, should any one of the independent Members be unable to sit for any length of time.

The law requires that the full Council must formally appoint the Independent Members to the Standards Committee, and these will be submitted to the full Council by May 2010.

Term of Appointment

Applicants appointed as Independent Members of the Standards Committee serve a term of 4 years.

Allowances

Independent Members of the Standards Committee receive an allowance of £445 per year.

Code of Conduct for Members

Elected Councillors are expected to demonstrate high standards of conduct in public life. To help them understand their responsibilities, the Government has issued a Model Code of Conduct. The Council has adopted this Code, and elected Members must also sign a commitment to abide by the Code whenever they are representing the Council. The Code includes a number of duties and responsibilities, including the requirement for Members to act fairly and properly at all times; not to use their position to advantage themselves or others; not to do anything which would bring the authority into disrepute; and to act reasonably in coming

to decisions. The Code also explains to Members how they must deal with potential or actual conflicts of interest when carrying out their duties. It outlines when and how Members must declare any personal and prejudicial interests; when they can continue to participate in making decisions, and when they must withdraw from the decision making process.

Members are also expected to sign the Register of Members' Interests, which records any financial interest they may have, (e.g. their employment, any sponsorship, contracts, land interests, licences and securities) and also any non-financial interests (e.g. membership of other local authorities, national public bodies, voluntary organisations and companies or charities). Finally, the Code includes 10 general principles Members should exhibit in public life of honesty and integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; personal judgement; respect for others; duty to uphold the law; stewardship; leadership.

Standards for England

Standards for England is a national body responsible for overseeing the national framework for conduct and as a strategic overseer of local standards committees. Its responsibilities include providing support for Standards Committees, monitoring the performance of authorities and investigating serious cases where referrals have come from local Standards Committees.

Job Title: **Independent Member of the Standards Committee**

Date: DECEMBER 2009

ROLE PURPOSE

To act as an Independent Member of the Standards Committee and work with other Members to fulfil the duties outlined below.

MAIN DUTIES

List of the principal duties of the post and the role specific accountabilities.

Specific Duties	
1.	To promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives.
2.	To assist Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives to observe the Code of Conduct.
3.	To advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.
4.	To monitor the operation of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.
5.	To develop and recommend local protocols to the Council to supplement the Councillors' Code of Conduct.
6.	To enforce local protocols and apply sanctions in respect of breaches as appropriate.
7.	To advise, train and arrange training for Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives on matters relating to the Councillors' Code of Conduct.
8.	To grant dispensations to Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives from requirements relating to interests set out in the Councillors' Code of Conduct.
9.	To deal with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matter which is referred by an Ethical Standards Officer to the Monitoring Officer.
10.	To keep under review and amend, as appropriate, the protocol on Councillor / Officer relations.

11.	To receive reports and keep an overview of probity matters arising from investigations, Monitoring Officer reports, reports of the Chief Financial Officer and Audit Commission.
12.	To have oversight of the Council's whistleblowing policy.
13.	To agree the policy for decisions on payments to those adversely affected by Council maladministration (under Section 92 Local Government Act 2000).
14.	To establish sub-committees to deal with complaints that a Councillor or a co-opted Member has failed to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct.
15.	To consider any application received from an officer of the authority from exemption from political restrictions under Sections 1 & 2 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Note for applicants – The selection criteria specifies the knowledge, experience, skills, abilities, qualifications and training required to perform the duties of the post for which you are applying.

In your application you will need to explain how your knowledge, experience, skills, abilities gained in paid or unpaid work, study or training, meets each of the selection criteria marked 'A' below, including your awareness, understanding and commitment to equality and diversity in employment and service delivery, If you fail to do so, you will not be shortlisted.

Shortlisting will be on the basis of assessing the selection criteria marked 'A'.

Ranking Order	Knowledge Indicator	Method of Assessment
1.	Able to demonstrate a range of knowledge and experience adding value to the work of the Standards Committee.	Application / Interview
2.	Able to demonstrate an awareness of the cultural and ethnic diversity of the citizens of Harrow. A commitment to equal opportunities and to good relations between different communities.	Application
3.	An understanding of the role of the Council, its Councillors and Local Government generally.	Application

	Skills and Abilities	Method of Assessment
4.	Able to demonstrate tact and good interpersonal and communication skills	Application / Interview
5.	Able to analyse problems and issues objectively and give clear oral and written impartial advice.	Application / Interview
6.	A person willing to give reasons for decisions or actions taken in a spirit of openness whilst respecting issues of confidentiality.	Application / Interview
7.	Able to demonstrate honesty and integrity.	Application / Interview

8.	Show commitment to local democracy, community involvement and the public interest.	Application
----	--	--------------------

	Other Essential Factors	Method of Assessment
9.	Have sufficient time to devote to the appointment and an ability to attend at least 4 evening meetings a year, plus daytime hearings and training events.	Application
10.	Must not have had been a member of a political party within three years and be seen by Members to be clearly independent and impartial.	Application / Interview
11.	Must not have been a councillor or officer of the Council within the last five years or a close relative of such a person.	Application / Interview
12.	Must not be a Member or officer of any local authority.	Application / Interview
13.	Must not have any unspent criminal convictions.	Application / Interview