

Norfolk County Council

Date: Tuesday 20 May 2025

Time: 10 am

Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Martineau Lane,
Norwich NR1 2DH

Supplementary Agenda

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| 11. Council Appointments for the 2025/26 Municipal Year
Report by the Director of Democratic and Regulatory Services | Page A2 |
| 13. Appointment of Independent Persons
Report by the Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer | Page A9 |
| 14. Notice of Motions (updated) | Page A15 |

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Council Appointments for the 2025/26 Municipal Year

Report by the Director of Democratic and Regulatory Services

1. Background

- 1.1 Council must approve the appointment of the council's main committees for the Municipal year and the allocation of the committee places.
- 1.2 Corporate Select Committee has recommended the council agrees to adopt a new committee structure. As this matter is subject to council's agreement, this report has been produced with two appendices. Appendix A reflects the allocation of places for political groups to the current unchanged committees and appendix B reflects the allocation of places for political groups to the new committees. Council will be asked to consider the appendix which accords with the earlier council decision.
- 1.3 Council is also be asked to appoint to those other committees that the Council considers appropriate to deal with matters which are neither reserved to the Council nor are executive functions and determine their size and membership and any changes to their terms of reference. These are outlined in Appendix C.
- 1.4 Council must appoint Chairs and some Vice Chairs for the committees listed under point 2 of appendix A and appendix B. Details of councillors nominated will be circulated to Members as soon as possible.
- 1.5 Council must also appoint to certain bodies and the nominations for these are set out below in Appendix D.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Council is asked to note the forming of two new political Groups, Independent Progressive Group with three councillors and Reform Group with two councillors.
- 2.2 The overall composition of the council is:

53	Conservative Group
10	Liberal Democrat Group
09	Labour Group
04	Green Group
03	Independent Group
03	Independent Progressive Group
02	Reform Group
84	Total

3. Recommendations

Full Council is asked to:

- 3.1 Appoint the council's committees for the Municipal year and agree the allocation of committee places shown under point 1 of appendix A or appendix B in accordance with Council's earlier decision.**
- 3.2 Approve the appointment of committee Chairs and Vice Chairs as specified under point 2 of appendix A or appendix B in accordance with Council's earlier decision.**
- 3.3 Appoint to those additional Committees as listed in Appendix C.**
- 3.4 Approve the appointments to outside bodies as listed in Appendix D.**

1. Allocation of committee places to existing structure

	Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group	Labour Group	Green Group	Independent Group	Independent Progressive Group	Reform Group
Existing Committees							
Planning (Regulatory) Committee	8	1	1	1	0	1	1
People & Communities Select Committee	8	2	1	0	1	1	0
Infrastructure & Development Select Cttee	8	1	1	1	1	0	1
Corporate Select Committee	8	2	2	1	0	0	0
Scrutiny Committee	8	1	1	1	1	1	0
Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee	5	1	1	1	0	0	0
Audit and Governance Committee	5	1	1	0	0	0	0
Pensions Committee	3	1	1	0	0	0	0
Employment Committee	5	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total allocation (overall 92 places)	58	11	10	5	3	3	2

2. Appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs for the following committees:

Committee

Planning (Regulatory) Committee
 People and Communities Select Committee
 Infrastructure and Development Select Committee
 Corporate Select Committee
 Scrutiny Committee
 Audit and Governance Committee
 Pensions Committee (Chair only)
 Employment Committee
 Health and Wellbeing Board (Chair only)

1. Allocation of committee places to the proposed structure - new committees are highlighted.

Proposed Committees	Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group	Labour Group	Green Group	Independent Group	Independent Progressive Group	Reform Group
Planning (Regulatory) Committee	8	1	1	1	0	1	1
Children, Families & Communities Select Committee	8	2	1	0	1	1	0
Infrastructure & Development Select Committee	8	1	1	1	1	0	1
Social Care & Public Health Select Committee	8	2	2	1	0	0	0
Strategic & Corporate Select Committee	8	1	1	1	1	1	0
Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee	5	1	1	1	0	0	0
Audit and Governance Committee	5	1	1	0	0	0	0
Pensions Committee	3	1	1	0	0	0	0
Employment Committee	5	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total allocation (overall 92 places)	58	11	10	5	3	3	2

2. Appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs for the following committees:

Committee

Planning (Regulatory) Committee
 Children, Families and Communities Select Committee
 Infrastructure and Development Select Committee
 Social Care and Public Health Select Committee
 Strategic and Corporate Select Committee
 Audit and Governance Committee
 Pensions Committee (Chair only)
 Employment Committee
 Health and Wellbeing Board (Chair only)

Appoint to Committees

Norfolk Police and Crime Panel

	Total no. of places	Cons	Lib Dem	Labour	Green	Inde	Inde Prog	Reform
Membership - politically balanced	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0

*The political group allocations to the Police and Crime Panel are calculated with reference to the requirement for the Panel to be politically balanced based upon the overall political balance of Council seats in Norfolk. The 7 district councils each appoint 1 representative and the County Council makes its 3 appointments to ensure that the overall political balance is achieved.

Any changes to the County Council group allocations to the Panel can be confirmed once District Councils have appointed to the Panel.

Regulatory and other Committees

Health and Wellbeing Board

Cabinet member for Public Health and Wellbeing

Cabinet member for Children's Services

Cabinet member for Adult Social Care

Local Government Pension Scheme Access Joint Committee

1 Conservative – appointee usually Chair of Pensions Committee

Joint Committees

Norfolk Joint Museums Committee

	Total no. of places	Cons	Lib Dem	Labour	Green
Membership - politically balanced	9	6	1	1	1

Norfolk Records Committee

Membership – politically balanced:

Total number of places:

Conservative 2

Liberal Democrat 1

Appendix D – Appointments to Outside Bodies 2025/26

1. Appointments to the outside bodies Norfolk Parking Partnership and the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Management Committee and sub-committees will be made in due course by the Leader.
2. Council appointed Outside Bodies

Eastern Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority	Total no. of places	Conservative	Liberal Democrat
Membership	3	2	1

Planning and Traffic Regulation Outside London Joint Committee (PATROL)	Total no. of places	Conservative
Membership	1	1
Named Substitute		

National Bus Lane Adjudication Committee	Total no. of places	Conservative
Membership	1	1
Named Substitute		

County Council

Item No: 13

Report Title: Appointment of Independent Persons

Date of Meeting: 20 May 2025

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Kay Mason Billig - Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy & Governance

Responsible Director: Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

Executive Summary

The Localism Act 2011 specifies that every Council must appoint, through a proper recruitment process, at least one independent person. Independent persons play a key role in the Council's procedures for investigating complaints relating to ethical standards and their views are sought and considered before a decision is made on whether a Member has breached the County Council's Code of Conduct.

The current period of office of the County Council's two independent persons ends later this month and a recruitment process has therefore been held to recruit to new positions as from May 2025.

On 2nd May a recruitment panel met consisting of the Vice Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, Cllr Robert Savage, the Monitoring Officer and a HR Business Partner to interview for the recruitment of two new appointees. The panel unanimously agreed to recommend two candidates to the roles (Julie Westmacott and Steve Ray) and asks Council to approve these appointments.

Recommendations –

Council is asked to approve the recommendation from the interview panel to appoint Julie Westmacott and Steve Ray to be the County Council's Independent Persons.

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 outlined the importance of retaining a proper degree of independence within the system for dealing with complaints relating to ethical standards. The Act was intended to ensure transparency, and provide assurance that complaints are dealt with effectively and at a distance from the political arena. For this reason, every Council must appoint, through a proper recruitment process, at least one Independent Person. In March 2016 the then County Council Standards Committee agreed that the appointment of one single person had given rise to difficulties at certain times and agreed to appoint two persons to ensure resilience in covering the duties of the role.
- 1.2 The Localism Act sets out very specific criteria for who can undertake the role and a person is not independent for these purposes if they are:
- i) a Member, co-opted member or officer of the authority, or
 - ii) a Member, co-opted member or officer of a parish council of which the authority is the principal authority.
- 1.3 Independent persons need to be trusted, experienced and objective advisors from diverse backgrounds. They provide their services to the council on a voluntary basis and they:
- Do not have voting powers
 - Are not officers, Councillors or Audit and Governance Committee members
 - Are not co-opted onto the council
 - Their views must be taken into account by the relevant Committee in any case where an investigation has been commissioned and the committee has to make a decision

The views of the Independent Persons may be considered by the Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer at various stages during any informal processes. They may also give their opinions to a Councillor who has had a complaint made about them and who seeks advice. It is important to note that this role will not extend to advocacy. An independent person will remain objective, therefore, in the advice that he/she gives to members, the Monitoring Officer and the Audit and Governance Committee.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The current period of office of the two previous Independent Persons ends later this month and a recruitment process has therefore been held to recruit to new positions as from May 2025. The normal period of office for appointment is 4 years however considering potential local government reform the appointment is proposed for a period of two years with an option to extend by a further two.

- 2.2 On 2nd May 2025 a panel met consisting of the Vice Chair of Audit and Governance Committee, Cllr Robert Savage, Monitoring Officer and HR Business Partner to interview for the recruitment of two new appointees. Several applicants were received from which the panel interviewed seven potential candidates. The Panel unanimously agreed to recommend two candidates to the roles (Julie Westmacott and Steve Ray) and asks Council to approve these appointments. A brief resume of each of the candidates is attached at Appendix A.

3. Impact of the Proposal and Reasons for the Decision

- 3.1 Appointing two independent persons will ensure that the County Council complies with the Localism Act 2011. It will also ensure that we have robust measures in place for dealing with complaints relating to ethical standards and transparency in our processes.
- 3.2 In appointing two people to the role the County Council will have access to more than one independent perspective and will provide continuity and resilience should one person not be available or need to stand down before the end of the term of their appointment.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Council could decide not to appoint one or both of the candidates however not appointing an independent person would contravene the Council complying with the Localism Act 2011.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Independent persons are entitled to receive an annual retainer of £500 for the role and claim remuneration at a rate of £50 per case for work carried out in respect of their duties.

6. Resource Implications

- 6.1 **Workforce:** N/A
- 6.2 **Property:** N/A
- 6.3 **IT:** N/A

7. Other Implications

7.1 Legal Implications:

Not appointing an Independent Person(s) would put the County Council at risk of not complying with the Localism Act 2011.

In accordance with the Act the independent persons appointment must be by approval of the majority of Members of the Council

7.2 Human Rights Implications: N/A

7.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):

In considering the advertising and appointment of the Independent Persons the Council has sought to ensure that candidates were able to come forward from as diverse a background as possible.

7.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA): N/A

7.5 Health and Safety implications (where appropriate): N/A

7.6 Sustainability implications (where appropriate): N/A

7.7 Impact of Devolution on the decision (where appropriate): N/A

7.8 Impact on Devolution of the decision (where appropriate): N/A

7.9 Impact of Local Government Reorganisation on the decision (where appropriate):

The appointment of independent persons has been proposed for a period of two years with an option to extend by two years if necessary to allow for changes arising from local government reorganisation.

7.10 Impact on Local Government Reorganisation of the decision (where appropriate): N/A

7.11 Any Other Implications:

8. Risk Implications / Assessment

8.1 Not appointing an Independent Person(s) would put the County Council at risk of not complying with the Localism Act 2011.

9. Select Committee Comments

9.1 N/A

10. Recommendations

Council is asked to approve the recommendation from the interview panel to appoint Julie Westmacott and Steve Ray to be the County Council's Independent Persons.

11. Background Papers

11.1 Localism Act 2011 - [Localism Act 2011](#)

Officer Contact

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Julie Westmacott

Julie Westmacott has worked in the public sector for over thirty years in both strategic and operational management. She was formerly a school governor and chair of governors. She currently works in the third sector.

Steve Ray

Steve Ray is a safety, security, travel risk, and crisis management consultant working part-time and remotely for international not-for-profit organisations. He advises on risk management, safety and security practices, audits and compliance, safeguarding, training, after-action reviews, and incident reporting. Over 30 years of operational experience in international humanitarian work, specialising in emergency disaster and crisis response, rehabilitation, recovery, and development with the UK government (DFID now FCDO), the UN, Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, NGOs, and the private sector

Notice of Motions (updated)

Notice of the following motion has been given in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules.

The following alteration to the motion has been agreed in consultation with the Monitoring Officer:

3.	Labour Group Motion Care Homes Proposer: Cllr Steve Morpew Seconder: TBA As long ago as 2010 Council recognised the need to refurbish and replace its existing care stock to meet growing and changing needs of the people of Norfolk. The Council set ambitious targets that were to be met through the creation of NorseCare. It was reported to the Adult Social Care Committee on 6th November 2017 that in 2011 'Norfolk County Council (NCC) created NorseCare, a company wholly owned by the County Council, operating within the Norse Group. The company was created to operate all NCC care homes and provide care into previously NCC run housing with care schemes. NorseCare operates under a contractual relationship with NCC. As part of the vision for establishing the company, NorseCare was required to transform its ageing estate over 15 years. All care staff and associated management and support staff transferred to the new company with the expectation they would, wherever possible, be redeployed in the new care settings as the transformation programme proceeded.' The same report said 'To date NorseCare has made progress in transforming and adapting the estate. Four new schemes have opened to replace nine unmodernised homes. With investment from the council of some £5.6m, this has resulted in 143 dementia places and 122 housing with care units.' However, it is now clear the upgrade and modernisation has not proceeded as initially envisaged. As a result, many of the care homes are not up to modern standards, carry vacancies and have turned NorseCare into a loss making business that is closing care homes now deemed unviable. Council 1. Reaffirms its commitment to NorseCare or a future equivalent basis for insourcing care provision, moderating the market, and providing a basis for collaborative care delivery in local government reorganisation proposals.
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2. Recognises the current governance structure for the NorseCare contract has not been applied since 2019. This has added to the lack of appropriate action in providing uplift to Norse to enable them to invest, and a lack of clarity about further investment by the county council.
3. Recognises the contract with Norse ends in 2026 and is concerned that as the estate currently stands the contract is unlikely to be attractive to any provider making independent business based decisions
4. Further recognises NorseCare is part of the Norse group and while wholly owned by Norfolk County Council has to make its decisions on the basis of its business interests not the political preferences of its owners, and within Takal rules.

The significance of Norse as part of a new unitary structure for local government will require any configuration of new authorities to be confident that legacy contracts, including any with NorseCare, especially given the scale of spend through the existing NorseCare contract, do not create a risk that is a threat to the viability of future services. A proper assessment of that risk will require a transparent, open book, financial and policy analysis based on clear data and projections.

Council further notes and welcomes the Cabinet forward work programme for June 2025 which includes an item 'Norfolk County Council's Owned Residential Care provision and care contracts post-March 2026' but is concerned this is currently scheduled to be exempt and therefore considered without publication of the report or debate in public.

Council believes it is in the public interest for all further deliberations of council policy towards the approach to the future of care services currently delivered by Norse with any additions or reductions should be taken in public other than detailed contract negotiations.

Council therefore resolves that in accordance with the terms of the 1972 Local Government Act matters related to the renewal or reletting of the contract currently held by NorseCare should ~~not~~ be carefully considered in terms of the public interest test before being treated as exempt.

Council therefore resolves to request those responsible for the decisions around the residential care estate and contractual arrangements subsequent to and associated with the current NorseCare contract, in accordance with the terms of the Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act, to carefully consider the public interest test before treating any matters as exempt.