

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Full Council

Date: 21/05/2025

Subject: Appointment of Independent Person

Report of: The Leader of the Council - Councillor Stephen Cowan

Report author: David Abbott, Head of Governance

Responsible Director: Grant Deg, Monitoring Officer

SUMMARY

The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to appoint at least one Independent Person to consider complaints against members and to offer their impartial views on each case, including any investigations undertaken. This report seeks the re-appointment of His Honour Judge John Rylance as an Independent Person.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That His Honour Judge John Rylance be re-appointed as Independent Person for another 2 years fixed term.
2. That the Council pay each appointed person a flat rate allowance of £1000 per annum payable in line with the Members' Allowance scheme.

Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Values
Taking pride in H&F	Ensuring a high standard of governance across the Council.

Financial Impact

There is sufficient provision in the existing budget to fund the costs of the Independent Persons' allowances as contained in this report.

Alex Pygram, Head of Finance, 24/05/2025

*Verified by Andre Mark, Head of Finance –Strategic Planning and Investment,
25/05/2025*

Legal Implications

The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to appoint at least one Independent Person to consider complaints against members and to offer their impartial views on each case, including any investigations undertaken.

Glen Egan, Assistant Director of Legal, 25/05/2025

Background papers used in preparing this report

Local Government Ethical Standards” the Committee on Standards in Public Life in January 2019: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-government-ethical-standards>

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Proposals

1. In its report “Local Government Ethical Standards” the Committee on Standards in Public Life in January 2019 recommended as best practice that local authorities should have access to at least two Independent Persons and that an Independent Person needs not just to be independent according to the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 but should also show an ability to:
 - offer authoritative and impartial advice
 - maintain independence in a politically sensitive environment
 - gain the confidence of councillors, officers, and the public
 - make decisions on an impartial basis, grounded in the evidence
 - work constructively with the local authority and senior officers
 - act as an impartial advisor to the council on code of conduct matters.
 - provide a view on code of conduct allegations based on the evidence before them, and whilst being aware of the political context, should be politically neutral.
2. His Honour Judge John Rylance, Mr Tom Babbedge and Ms Dilina Ostborn were appointed as independent persons in May 2019, then again in April 2021 and 2023. After serving 3 terms of office, the Council sought to appoint a new set of independent persons to undertake the function.

3. The Independent Persons positions were advertised online (on the Council's website, Nextdoor and LinkedIn). There were no successful candidates at interview. The Panel has recommended the reappointment of His Honour Judge John Rylance – retired Deputy Circuit Judge for a further fixed term of 2 years.

Reasons for Decision

4. The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to appoint at least one Independent Person to consider complaints against members and to offer their impartial views on each case, including any investigations undertaken.

LIST OF APPENDICES

None.