

## REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

*Reporting Officer: Head of Democratic Services*

### i) URGENT IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Urgency decisions detailed below be noted.

#### Information

1. The Constitution allows a Cabinet or Cabinet Member decision to be implemented before the expiry of the 5-day scrutiny call-in period, provided the decision is deemed urgent and agreement is given from the Chair of the relevant Select Committee that the matter is urgent and to waive the scrutiny call-in period. All such decisions, including those also under special urgency provisions, are to be reported for information only to the next full Council meeting.
2. Since last reported to Council, the following decisions have been made using urgency procedures:

Date of Decision	Nature of Decision	Reason for Urgency	Decision-Maker
24/07/2025	Award of Contract: Community Equipment Service	This provided the necessary contractual decisions to ensure the Council could respond swiftly to ensure service continuity for residents using this vital service.	Cabinet
16/09/2025	Christmas Lights 2025 one-year tender contract recommendation	Due to tight time constraints to deliver the lighting programme for Diwali and Christmas on time, as the project was operating under a compressed timeline, impacted by the full tendering process and securing sponsorship funding.	Leader of the Council and, on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Community & Environment
10/10/2025	HRA Acquisitions – Property Acquisition & Additional Capital request for Housing Buy-Backs	This ensured the property transactions proceeded to provide much needed affordable housing.	Deputy Leader of the Council (on behalf of the Leader of the Council) and on behalf of the Cabinet Members for Finance & Transformation and Planning, Housing & Growth
23/10/2025	Contractor for urgent boiler plant room works at Bourne Primary School	This ensured remedial action, replacing the boilers, so the school had heating restored before the cold weather.	Leader of the Council, and on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Property and the Cabinet Member for Finance & Transformation,

Date of Decision	Nature of Decision	Reason for Urgency	Decision-Maker
23/10/2025	Increasing Local Care Provision & Disposal of land at the Civic Centre	This ensured the Council could participate promptly in a unique and cost-effective care initiative that responds to increasing local needs. Timely involvement was essential to align with proposed development timelines and maximise the benefits for residents.	Cabinet
13/11/2025	Temporary accommodation Leasing Programme - Longford Properties	This avoided extra costs for securing costly temporary accommodation for homeless families.	Leader of the Council and on behalf of the Cabinet Members for Corporate Services & Property and Planning, Housing & Growth

Background Papers: Decision Notices

## ii) **POLITICAL GROUPS ON THE COUNCIL, CALCULATION OF POLITICAL BALANCE AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS**

### **Background**

1. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 provides a statutory basis for the rights of political groups to secure representation upon Council Committee and Sub-Committee meetings in proportion to their respective political strengths within the Council.
2. A 'political group' is one which has been constituted in accordance with Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 and consists of at least two Members. It is, therefore, separate from the concept of a political party, although it may well consist of Members of the same political persuasion.
3. The Council currently has three political groups:
  - The Conservative Group with Councillor Ian Edwards as Group Leader,
  - The Labour Group with Councillor Stuart Mathers as Group Leader and
  - The Hayes Independent Party Group with Councillor Peter Curling as Group Leader.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the alteration of the overall political balance of the Council, following the changes in Group membership detailed in the report, be noted and the following changes to membership of Council Committees etc. be approved:

- **Councillor Gohil to replace Councillor Singh on the Hillingdon Planning Committee,**
- **Councillor Basit to replace Councillor Nelson on the Health & Social Care Select Committee,**
- **Councillor Farley to replace Councillor Garg on the Corporate Resources and Infrastructure Select Committee and**

- **Councillor Singh to replace Councillor Farley on the Residents' Services Select Committee.**
- **Councillor Smallwood to replace Councillor Sullivan on the Pensions Committee.**
- **Councillor Punja to replace Councillor Farley as a Labour Group named substitute on the Audit Committee.**

### Information

- The Head of Democratic Services has recently received the requisite notices of changes to the composition of the Political Groups on the Council, whereby
  - Councillors Rita Judge and Scott Farley are no longer members of the Labour Group and have joined the Hayes Independent Party Group,
  - Councillor Jas Dhot is no longer a member of the Labour Group and has joined the Conservative Group and,
  - Councillor Naser Abby is no longer a member of the Labour Group and now sits as an independent Member.
- Council is asked to note the subsequent change in the overall political balance of the Council as shown below:

<b>Council composition</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>% cttee places</b>
<b>Conservative</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>58.49</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>30.19</b>
<b>Hayes Independent Party</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9.43</b>
<b>Independent</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.89</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	

- As a result of the above:
  - the Hayes Independent Party Group are entitled to two additional seats on Council Committees
  - the Conservative group are entitled to one additional seat and
  - the Labour Group are entitled to three fewer seats.

**NB** – as an independent Councillor, and not member of a Political Group on the Council, Councillor Abby is not entitled to any seats on Council Committees etc.
- It has been agreed that the membership of the following bodies will be amended as shown below to comply with the revised political balance:
  - Councillor Gohil to replace Councillor Singh on the Hillingdon Planning Committee,
  - Councillor Basit to replace Councillor Nelson on the Health & Social Care Select Committee,
  - Councillor Farley to replace Councillor Garg on the Corporate Resources and Infrastructure Select Committee and
  - Councillor Singh to replace Councillor Farley on the Residents' Services Select Committee.
  - In addition to the above, and not related to the changes in Group membership, the Conservative Group have indicated a change in the membership of the Pensions Committee with Councillor Smallwood to replace Councillor Sullivan

and the Labour Group have indicated that Councillor Punja is to replace Councillor Farley as a Labour Group named substitute on the Audit Committee.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9. These are contained within the report.

Background papers: Group Declaration forms

### **iii) APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY OFFICER**

#### **Background**

1. The Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), the Section 151 Officer (Corporate Director of Finance) and the Monitoring Officer are the Council's three Statutory Officers. These roles are key to ensuring lawfulness, fairness, probity and general good governance that supports the Council in achieving its aims. It is important that they work effectively together yet maintain appropriate independence and that the roles are undertaken by adequately skilled and experienced staff supported by appropriate resources.

**RECOMMENDATION: That the Director of Legal and Governance, when confirmed in post, be appointed to the statutory role of Monitoring Officer of the Council.**

**NB – the name and credentials of the successful candidate will be reported to the Council meeting.**

#### **Information**

#### **Monitoring Officer**

2. The appointment of a Monitoring Officer is a statutory requirement under Section 5 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989. The Monitoring Officer's role and responsibilities are also defined within the Council's Constitution. These include ensuring lawfulness and fairness of decision making, receiving reports, conducting investigations, ensuring access to information, advising whether executive decisions are within the budget and policy framework and maintaining the Constitution.
3. Members will recall that, following the departure from the authority of the interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer in February 2025, Council appointed the Head of Democratic Services, Mr White, to the role.
4. A recruitment process has been undertaken to the role of Director of Legal and Governance and it is intended that this role, being the most senior role responsible for governance in the authority, should exercise, the functions of the Monitoring Officer in a manner that enhances the overall reputation of the

Council with responsibility for the provision of expert legal advice to safeguard Members and officers whilst acting in their official capacities. Such an appointment will be in line with best practice.

5. Mr White will continue in his role as Monitoring Officer until such time as the new Director of Legal and Governance commences employment with the authority and then will revert to the role of Deputy Monitoring Officer. This will ensure continuity in the statutory role within establishment resources.

### **Financial Implications**

6. The cost of this appointment will be contained within existing budgets.

### **Legal Implications**

7. The appointment of a Monitoring Officer is a statutory requirement whose appointment is reserved to Full Council.

Background papers: none

## **iv) APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON**

### **SUMMARY**

1. In July 2012, Council adopted a new ethical framework in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 [the Act]. The Act made a number of significant changes to the previous ethical framework for Members and Co-opted members of local authorities, which came into force on 1 July 2012, including the adoption of a new Code of Conduct and the appointment of an 'Independent Person'.
2. Council first appointed an Independent Person in July 2013 for a three-year period and re-appointed the same person in July 2016 and 2019. However, in 2019 Council also decided that three consecutive terms should be the maximum and that, therefore a new person would be appointed in July 2022. Subsequently a further appointment was made in 2022 up until May 2026.
3. Members are asked to give consideration to the recommendation of the Standards Committee for the appointment of a further Independent Person (in addition to the current one) for the next period (until May 2030) – in line with the electoral cycle of the Council – to provide continuity and cover for the role.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS: That:**

- a) **Mr Roger Cook be appointed as the Council's second Independent Person until July 2030 and**
- b) **Mr Graeme Armour's appointment as Independent Person be extended to July 2030.**

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Independent Person

4. The 2011 Act envisaged a new role for an Independent Person and stated that there must be provision for the appointment by an authority of at least one Independent Person whose views are to be sought and taken into account in relation to the conduct of a Member or co-opted member of the authority.
5. Currently the Council has only one Independent Person, but best practice suggests that there should be a 'pool' of at least two for the authority to use in order to provide adequate cover and consistency.
6. Accordingly, Members are asked to consider an additional person for the role which, in summary, includes:
  - assisting the Council in discharging its duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by elected Members (Councillors) of the Council
  - advising the Council's Monitoring Officer in connection with the assessment of complaints against elected Members and, in addition, any potential sanctions that might arise from those complaints.
  - To exercise functions in connection with the proposed dismissal of any of the Council's statutory officers, being the Head of Paid Service, the Section 151 Officer (Corporate Director of Finance) and the Monitoring Officer.
7. The Independent Person must not be, or have been during the last 5 years, a Member, Co-opted Member or officer of the London Borough of Hillingdon. In addition, persons who wish to be considered for this role cannot be related to or be a close friend of a current or former Member or officer of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
8. Independent persons should be able to demonstrate a commitment to maintaining high standards in public life and have a keen interest in local government.
9. The Act requires that the appointment of an Independent Person be made after the position has been advertised to the general public. Accordingly, the Monitoring Officer has invited expressions of Interest for the role of Independent Person and on 13 October 2025 the Standards Committee interviewed prospective candidates for recommendation to Council.

### **Standards Committee Recommendation**

10. **The recommended candidate is Mr Roger Cook.**
11. Mr Cook is 66 years old, married with five grandchildren and one great grandson. He has been a resident of the Borough for over 50 years
12. Mr Cook retired as a Detective Inspector after 30 years' service with City of London Police during which time he was the operational head of the DCPCU (bank policing unit 2005-2007) and in 2007-2016, the UK's Overseas Anticorruption Unit. During this time, he worked closely with numerous anti-corruption bodies and NGO's, formed the Foreign Bribery Task Force with

the FBI, RCMP and Australian Federal Police and actively contributed to the development and implementation of The Bribery Act 2010, the British Standard 10500 and the ISO 37001 Standard for Anti-Bribery Management Systems. Mr Cook concluded his service as head of an operational Fraud team.

13. Since retiring Mr Cook has worked as an Animal Health Officer at the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre, utilising his BSc Hons Zoology degree, retiring in 2024.
14. Mr Cook describes himself as having a strong sense of justice and ethical responsibility, good verbal and written communication skills and a wealth of experience in engaging with senior political, law enforcement, business, charitable and activist personnel and communities at all levels. With more time available, he would like to use his ethical expertise and judgement to benefit the Borough's community.
15. The Standards Committee were impressed with Mr Cook's experience and his obvious interest in and enthusiasm for the role.'

#### **Additional Recommendation**

16. The current Independent Person is Mr Graeme Armour who has performed exceptionally in the role during his tenure to date and, with the endorsement of the Chair of the Standards Committee, it is recommended that his appointment be extended to July 2030 also to ensure continuity in the role.

#### **Financial Implications**

17. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Although a voluntary role, the position of Independent Person carries a Special Responsibility Allowance of £512.50 paid per meeting required and attended.

#### **Legal Implications**

18. The legal implications are contained in the body of the report.

Background Papers: Standards Committee Agenda 13 October 2025