

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Meeting to be held on Monday 27 April 2026

Appointment of Independent Person

(Not for publication – Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972)

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Executive Summary

The Localism Act 2011 requires the appointment of at least one independent person (IP) whose views must be taken into account when allegations of a breach of the member's code of conduct are being considered. It is however considered best practice for local authorities to have two such IPs, rather than one and the Authority does have two in line with this best practice. The term of one of them is however due to end in May 2026. The Service wishes to extend the contract of this individual for a term of four years to continue the provision of two IPs.

Recommendation(s)

The Authority is asked to approve the extension of appointment of Julie Byrom for four years to May 2030.

Information

The Localism Act 2011 requires the appointment of at least one independent person (IP) whose views must be taken into account when allegations of a breach of the member's code of conduct are being considered. It is however considered best practice for local authorities to have two such IPs.

IPs are people who are neither councillors nor officers of the Authority but are appointed to work with the Authority to uphold high ethical standards in respect of the the members' code of conduct. Their views must be sought and considered in relation to member complaints before deciding on an investigation or sanction, and they can also advise the member under investigation.

It is important that the people of Lancashire have confidence that allegations of member misconduct are dealt with properly. Appointing independent people ensures that the Authority has an open and transparent process for dealing with potential breaches of the code of conduct.

Following the Authority's approval of a new disciplinary procedure for statutory officers in February 2026, the IP role will be extended to include involvement in this procedure.

Following a recruitment process in 2022, two IPs were appointed for different length terms to avoid them coming to an end at the same time. Julie Byrom was appointed for a term of four years.

Julie is an experienced independent person, working with local authorities across the country to uphold member standards and also professional standards within children's services. She has an extensive background in health, acting as a Fitness to Practise Panellist at the General Dental Council, Scottish Social Services Council and Social Care Wales, and as a Disciplinary Panellist for the National Register of Public Service Interpreters. Julie is a Trustee Board Member at the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses where she is also Chair of the Governance Committee.

Julie Byrom's contract is due to expire on 2 May 2026 and she has indicated a willingness to continue in the position for another four years. This length of term will ensure the Authority continues to have sufficient arrangements in place. Ann Highton is the other IP and her contract is in place until 2028.

The Authority is asked to approve the extension of appointment of Julie Byrom for four years to May 2030.

Business risk

IPs play a vital role in upholding high ethical standards in local authorities, which is critical to maintaining public confidence and is a statutory requirement. Best practice is for public authorities to have two IPs (recommendation in Local Government Ethical Standards - A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, 2019). This reduces the risk of the Authority having any period without an IP which is increased if only one person is in position and gives notice to terminate their contract. Having two people in position for terms that end in a staggered timeframe also reduces this risk.

Sustainability or Environmental Impact

None.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The reappointment proposed in the recommendation means that the post is not being readvertised in the community however a full open recruitment process took place at initial appointment in 2022.

Data Protection (GDPR)

Will the proposal(s) involve the processing of personal data? **Y**

If the answer is yes, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team to assist with the appropriate exemption clause for confidential consideration under part 2 of the agenda.

HR implications

Contract renewal to be arranged. Consultation with director of people has taken place.

Financial implications

£1,143.24 per annum allowance, subject to inflationary increases.

Legal implications

The provisions of section 28(6) and 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 require local authorities to appoint at least one independent person, whose views are to be sought,

and taken into account, by the Authority before it makes its decision on an allegation that it has decided to investigate.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of background papers

Paper: Appointment of Independent Person

Date: Monday 22 April 2024

Contact: Mark Nolan, Clerk and Monitoring Officer

Paper: Appointment of Independent Persons

Date: Monday 25 April 2022

Contact: Mark Nolan, Clerk and Monitoring Officer

Reason for inclusion in Part 2 if appropriate: Paragraph 1