

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Policy & Resources Committee Court of Common Council	Dated: 19 th February 2026 5 th March 2026
Subject: Appointment of Independent Persons	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes• provides statutory duties	Supporting the delivery of all the Corporate Plan 2024 – 29 outcomes Localism Act 2011
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Joint report of the Town Clerk and Comptroller and City Solicitor
Report author:	Kate Doidge, Governance Officer

Summary

Following a governance review in 2021, the City of London Corporation established a Panel of Independent Persons to assist the Corporation in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by elected and co-opted members, which has been in operation since 2022. The Corporation must appoint at least one independent person whose views must be sought and taken into account before it makes a decision on a complaint against a member or co-opted member.

At full capacity, the Panel is formed of twelve Independent Persons. At present, there are four vacancies. The purpose of this report is therefore to seek the Court of Common Council's approval of the recommendations of the Appointment Panel following a recent, successful round of recruitment and to agree to the appointment of the final four individuals named within this report as Independent Persons, bringing the Independent Panel back to the desired level of twelve.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to endorse the recommendations of the Appointment Panel in securing the valued services of Aaqil Ahmed, Alison Abu, Christopher Lake and Patrick Hodson and approve their appointment as Independent Persons of the City of London Corporation.

Main Report

Background

1. The Localism Act 2011 requires a relevant authority to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its members and co-opted members and to adopt a Code dealing with the conduct that is expected of them when they are acting in that capacity. It must include provision for the appointment by the authority of at least one independent person whose views must be sought and taken into account before it makes a decision on a complaint against a member. The legislation only applies to the City of London Corporation in its capacity as a local authority or police authority. The Corporation has, however, chosen to apply this Code to all of its functions.
2. The Panel of Independent Persons was initially established by the City of London Corporation by way of Court of Common Council Resolution on 14 January 2021. This was following an independent Governance Review of the City Corporation, which proposed the establishment of an Independent Panel composed only of Independent Persons (convening as smaller sub-panels of three), to receive allegations of misconduct under the Code of Conduct, determine whether to investigate, present findings to the Court, and hear any appeal. The Panel also has responsibility for making recommendations as to whether or not dispensations should be granted or refused.
3. The Independent Panel operates through a different sub-panel for each stage of the process:
 - (i) Assessment Panel;
 - (ii) Hearing Panel;
 - (iii) Appeal Panel.

It should also be noted that where an elected member wishes to make a complaint against another elected member, there is a strong expectation that, before the Independent Panel is engaged, they should first seek a resolution to their concern in accordance with a separate pre-complaint protocol – by seeking the assistance of either the Chair of General Purposes Committee of Aldermen or the Chair of Nominations Committee of Aldermen or the Chief Commoner, as appropriate.

4. The Panel was formally established in July 2021, initially of nine members, with a further three members approved in October 2023, to bring the Panel to a total of twelve to ensure that adequate panel members were available to cover all necessary stages of a complaint noting that no one Independent Person may sit on more than one stage of the same complaint, but also to take into account availability and any potential conflicts of interest. Further, subject member(s) are entitled to consult confidentially with an Independent Person at any stage during the complaints process, who are then not involved in the determination of the complaint at any stage.
5. Following the resignation of two Panel Members, the Panel sat at ten members. During its annual meeting, the Panel agreed that two existing Independent Persons would also 'rotate off' the Panel, ending their terms at the end of 2025, and allow for the recruitment of four new Independent Persons to the Panel.

Current Position

Appointment Process

6. Following consultation including the existing Chair of Independent Persons and a skills and experience audit with the existing Panel, advertisements for the vacancies were, on this occasion, placed on the City of London's webpages, the Guardian, City AM and the Local Government Chronicle, with a view to attracting applicants from diverse backgrounds.
7. Applicants were informed that the City were seeking to appoint individuals with relevant experience in the private or public sectors and individuals who would both promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the Corporation's elected Members and co-opted Members when dealing with the business of the Corporation
8. It was also made clear that an Independent Person cannot be someone who, at the time of appointment:
 - has been a Member, Co-opted Member or officer of the City of London Corporation in the previous five years; or
 - is a relative or close friend of a Member or officer of the City of London Corporation.
9. The Court of Common Council were supportive of remuneration for Independent Persons – the position was therefore advertised with a daily attendance allowance of £300 and reasonable travel expenses also reimbursed. This daily attendance allowance has since increased to £325. Attendance depends on the number and complexity of cases to be dealt with as well as any necessary briefing and training sessions.
10. The Appointment Panel comprised of:
 - A representative from the Chairman of General Purposes Committee of Aldermen
 - The Chief Commoner
 - A representative of the Chairman of Policy & Resources Committee
11. The Appointment Panel were supported by two representatives of the Panel of Independent Persons, providing an advisory role (who shared the role across the interviews owing to availability). Administrative support was provided by the Town Clerk's Department.
12. A total of 68 applications were received. Following a shortlisting process and assessment by the Panel, it was decided unanimously on eleven candidates to shortlist and invite to attend an interview over the course of the weeks commencing 5th and 12th January 2026. One candidate withdrew their application prior to the interviews taking place, and thus the Panel interviewed ten candidates total.
13. Following face to face interviews held at the Guildhall, the Panel were unanimously of the view that four of the ten candidates invited to interview on this occasion were particularly strong and that all four would be a great asset to the City of London's Standards Regime in terms of breadth and relevance of their knowledge and experience.

14. The purpose of this report is, therefore, to seek formal approval for the recommendations of the Appointment Panel – that those four candidates (Aaqil Ahmed, Alison Abu, Christopher Lake, and Patrick Hodson) be appointed as Independent Persons.

Details of Recommended Appointees

15. **Aaqil Ahmed** is a broadcaster, academic and non executive director across the media, University and regulatory sectors. Aaqil has had a long career in broadcasting working as an executive at both Channel 4 and the BBC as well as serving on the England advisory committee of OFCOM. His portfolio of work and voluntary roles have a theme of service and of challenging the status quo. His work with regulators such as the Advertising standards Authority and MEDR the post 16 regulator and funder for education and training in Wales has required Aaqil to adjudicate on complaints and shape policy and delivery that have helped the sectors involved evolve and continue to be relevant. Aaqil delivers training on leadership and is an accredited executive coach. Skills which he has used to help many organisations and individuals deal with structural change and challenging moments. His experience in crisis management and communications was honed as the Head of Religion and Ethics at the BBC and across his varied portfolio of work he is regularly asked to assess information and situations both big and small and local and global. Aaqil has worked with local councils and devolved and national Governments. Many of these roles have involved giving impartial advice as well as helping review the work of national institutions.

16. Mr. Ahmed states that he describes himself as a storyteller with the ability to help deliver solutions. He has a track record of decision making across many varied subject areas and is very confident in his belief that he is a truly independent person with the interests of everyone at heart and the ability to deliver transparent and robust decisions however challenging that may feel at the time.

17. **Alison Abu** started her career in the City of London and is an accomplished Senior International HR Director and Independent Panel Member. She has over 25 years experience and is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), the professional body for HR, Learning and Development. She brings extensive expertise in professional governance and fitness-to-practice tribunals across the UK and currently holds tribunal and panel roles with the Judicial Appointments Commission, Nursing and Midwifery Council, Health and Care Professions Council, Metropolitan Police, Ministry of Defence, British Transport Police, Surrey Police and Transport Focus. With a career grounded in ethical leadership and regulatory excellence, Alison has served on multidisciplinary panels responsible for receiving allegations of misconduct, determining the need for investigation, presenting findings to relevant regulators, and adjudicating appeals. Her work reflects a deep understanding of complex organisational systems and the critical role of fair, transparent decision-making in maintaining public trust.

18. Alison Abu states that they are widely respected for their clarity in communication, sound judgement, and unwavering integrity, and is a dedicated advocate for equality, diversity, and inclusive practice. They are known for delivering credible, independent assessments in highly sensitive cases and for making balanced recommendations on sanctions when required adhering to the Nolan Principles

and the seven principles of Public Life. Beyond her tribunal responsibilities, Alison continues to champion professional standards and inclusive cultures within marginalised communities, shaping workplaces where accountability, respect, and public trust are central to organisational success.

19. **Dr Christopher Lake** is a former fast stream civil servant and Oxford academic. He currently serves as a Trustee of The Arbib Education Trust, a Member of the Excellence in Education Trust, and a Lay Panel Member of the Health and Care Professions Council Tribunal Service. He has also served as an Independent Panel Member of the Metropolitan Police Authority. He was founder of a specialist higher education recruitment consultancy.
20. Dr Lake states that, as a Londoner, he grew up with a keen sense of the historical, cultural, and commercial significance of the Square Mile. He has a deep interest in public policy, professional regulation, and applied ethics. He likes to explore different points of view and, across his career, has enjoyed working with others to test arguments and decipher evidence in a spirit of fairness and courtesy.
21. **Patrick Hodson** served in the Royal Hong Kong Police from 1985 to 2020. He held a number of operational and staff posts. He was an Assistant Commissioner responsible for all aspects of operational policy and, in his last posting, commanded the Marine Police. He also served as the Commissioner's Staff Officer. He currently serves as an Independent Person for three councils across Hertfordshire - St Albans District Council, North Herts District Council, and Hertsmere Borough Council.
22. Mr. Hodson states that he recognises the importance the Nolan Principles have for public life. He has had a variety of experience in upholding the values of an organisation, ensuring high standards of conduct, accountability and mentoring to ensure it continues to secure the respect and trust of the community it serves. He enjoys working in a team environment to best fulfil common objectives.
23. As a reminder, these final four appointees, should they be approved, would join our previously appointed Panel (currently consisting of Miranda Carruthers-Watt, Robert Coyle, Amina Hossain, Tom Kettleley, Karen McArthur, Amanda Orchard, Rahul Sinha, and Atiyyah Younis) to form our Panel of twelve Independent Persons. Further details of the previously appointed eight are set out within the May 2021, July 2021 and October 2023 Court reports respectively.

Options

Option 1

24. Members endorse the recommendations of the Appointment Panel and secure the valued services of the four named candidates to join the Independent Panel. **This is recommended.**

Option 2

25. Alternatively, Members may be inclined to not endorse the recommendations of the Appointment Panel (for either one, two, three or all four of the named candidates) and request to re-commence the recruitment process. However, doing so would result in the vacancies on the Panel remaining outstanding and poses a risk to the Corporation should a complaint proceed through the three-tier process whilst the Panel is not at the full complement of twelve Independent Persons. **This is not recommended.**

Proposals

26. Members are therefore asked to endorse the recommendations of the Appointment Panel in securing the valued services of Aaqil Ahmed, Alison Abu, Christopher Lake, and Patrick Hodson and approve their appointment as Independent Persons of the City of London Corporation.

Corporate & Strategic Implications –

Strategic implications – The fundamental aim of the Code of Conduct, and its underpinning governance, is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of Members and the Corporation, which includes the support of the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2024-2029.

Financial implications – None

Resource implications – None

Legal implications – The Localism Act 2011 requires a relevant authority to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its members and co-opted members and to adopt a Code dealing with the conduct that is expected of them when they are acting in that capacity. It must include provision for the appointment by the authority of at least one independent person whose views must be sought and taken into account before it makes a decision on a complaint against a member. The legislation only applies to the City of London Corporation in its capacity as a local authority or police authority. The Corporation has, however, chosen to apply this Code to all of its functions.

Risk implications – Having less than the full complement of panel members does pose the risk of not having enough Independent Persons for a complaint, should the complaint proceed through the three-tier process and require an Independent Person designated for consultation with the subject member(s).

Equalities implications – Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on the Corporation. Members have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the Corporation's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

Climate implications – None

Security implications – None

Conclusion

27. The Appointment Panel, having overseen the recruitment to the Panel of Independent Persons, hereby recommend that the four persons named within this report (Aaqil Ahmed, Alison Abu, Christopher Lake, and Patrick Hodson) to the Court of Common Council.

Appendices

None

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