



## WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO SOMETHING WORTHWHILE FOR STROUD?

Do you feel you have the time and the skills to make a positive contribution to Stroud District Council's Audit and Standards Committee?

Do you think you could bring an independent perspective to analyse the Council's arrangements for:-

- managing risk;
- maintaining an effective control environment; and
- reporting on financial and other performance matters?

We are looking to appoint an independent member to the Audit and Standards Committee, ideally someone with financial/auditing experience, or practical experience of managing risk.

If this opportunity interests you, but you would like to discuss it further without committing yourself please contact  XXXXX or  XXXXX

Alternatively, you can request an information pack and application form by email on XXXXXXXXXXXX

## Some key information about Stroud District

- Stroud District Council (SDC) is one of six districts in the county of Gloucestershire. It is a largely rural district covering approximately 175 square miles and is home to a population of approximately 118,130 residents living in 53,178 properties.
- We have 51 councillors covering 30 wards, who are elected every 4 years, the next election being in 2020. The political makeup of the Council comprises of Labour (16), Green (9), Liberal Democrat (2) Conservative (22), Conservative No Group (1) and Independent (1) complete the total membership. Stroud District Council is led by a cooperative alliance of the Labour, Green and Liberal Democrat parties. Cllr Doina Cornell (Labour) has been Leader of Council since January 2018. We changed to a committee system in May 2013. The Chief Executive (Kathy O'Leary) meets with the Leader weekly, alliance group leaders fortnightly and all four party group leaders monthly.
- There is a strong sense of community and democratic involvement, with an average turnout in our local elections of 42.5% in 2016 whilst for the general election 2017, it was 77%. Our survey of residents and businesses showed that 80% of local residents and 68% of businesses are satisfied with the way the Council runs things (budget consultation 2018). This is compared to the LGA survey average of 60%.
- The Council still owns and manages its own housing stock, having 5046 council homes, (of which 790 are sheltered accommodation), making SDC is the largest local authority landlord in Gloucestershire.
- We have consistently achieved a council tax collection rate in excess of 99%, which puts us in the top 20 councils nationally.
- Our recycling performance is the best in the South West of England, at 61% of all waste collected. Our waste service has been assessed and rated well by Association for Public Service Excellence.
- We offer excellent leisure services, with the Green Flag award winning Stratford Park and the Stratford Park Leisure Centre. Our new fitness centre, 'The Pulse' at Dursley is very popular and we also have an award winning Museum 'The Museum in the Park'. This is very much focused on the history of the Stroud locality and is a very popular destination promoting pride in our district.
- Our Local Plan is highly commended by the Royal Town Planning Institute and regarded regionally as an example of best practice, has been highly effective in delivering the Council's development plan as well as protecting the district from developments not supporting district and community needs.

## Role, Purpose and Description

### Background Information

The aim of the independent member is to bring a fresh and objective viewpoint to the work of the Audit and Standards Committee and support them to carry out their work.

The Audit and Standards Committee comprises nine Councillors. The role of the Audit and Standards Committee has evolved and they are central to the governance, internal control, compliance and risk aspects of the operation of the Council. Having an independent voice with the appropriate background knowledge and skills is advocated by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in their Audit Committee Guidance.

The work of the Audit Committee includes:-

- [Annual Governance Statement](#)
- [The Audit Committee Annual Report](#)
- [Approval of the Council's Financial Statements](#)

Full details of the Committee's roles and responsibilities are in the Audit and Standards Committee Terms of Reference at Appendix 1. These form part of Stroud District Council's Constitution.

Members of the Audit and Standards Committee receive training relevant to their role and are expected to keep up to date.

The independent member will be appointed through a process of public advertisement, application, interview and appointment.

The Council has a commitment to equal opportunities and welcomes applicants from all sections of the community. Also we operate a no smoking policy.

An annual allowance is payable, currently £550 per year will be payable. It is for a fixed term of 3 years.

The independent member will attend and participate in meetings of the Stroud District Council's Audit and Standards Committee

The Audit and Standards Committee meets five times per year and on an 'exception' basis as required.

The independent member, through their participation in the Audit and Standards Committee, will assist the Council to discharge their powers and functions as set out in the Audit and Standards Committee Terms of Reference.

To apply strategic thinking and materiality to reports presented and be able review at an appropriate level.

- To ask questions that draw out relevant facts and explanations.
- To provide challenge.
- To seek understanding and enable solutions.
- To evaluate information on the basis of evidence presented without political bias.
- To weigh up differing views and be able to come to an evidence based conclusion.
- To ask difficult questions to get to the facts while maintaining positive relationships.

You must have local connections or other recognisable ties to Stroud District.

Agree to abide by the Stroud District Council Members Code of Conduct (Training will be provided).

Members or officers of Stroud District Council or anyone who has or is a relative or close friend of a member or officer of the Council is not eligible. More detail can be found in Appendix 2 – Disqualifications for Appointment.

## Person Specification

Requirements	Where identified*	Essential	Desirable
A broad range of experience, preferably in public, private, voluntary and charitable sector employment or service including self-employed, employed and voluntary positions.	A	✓	
Understanding of the wider local government environment and accountability structures.	A		✓
Strategic/financial management responsibilities.	A		✓
Qualification in accountancy, finance, risk management, business management or internal audit.	A		✓
Good understanding of corporate governance and risk management and the key elements of audit, value for money and external scrutiny. The ability to formulate and evaluate solutions to the issues identified.	A		✓
Good understanding of the roles of internal and external audit.	I		✓
Ability to understand complex issues and make objective, evidence-based decisions.	I	✓	
Strong interpersonal and communication skills.	I	✓	
Willingness to participate in meetings and ask searching questions in order to challenge and hold to account Council Officers and the representatives of internal and external audit.	I	✓	
Attend and prepare for each meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee.	I	✓	
Ability/willingness to attend any relevant training or development activities associated with the role.	I	✓	
Independence of mind, objectivity and impartiality.	I	✓	

\* **A is application form**      **I is interview**

## **Appendix 1**

## **Terms of Reference**

Please refer to Agenda Item 7 – Appendix 1.

The following criteria will be applied for this role.

The Independent Person cannot be / have:

1. A member, co-opted member or officer of Stroud District Council;
2. A member, co-opted member or officer of a town or parish council of which the authority is the principal authority (i.e. Within Stroud District); or
3. A relative, or close friend, of a person within paragraphs 1 & 2.

The Council will not be able to appoint a person if at any time during the 5 years prior to the appointment the person was:

- (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.
4. Someone who has been convicted of any offence attracting a sentence of imprisonment whether suspended or not for a period of three months without the option of a fine. The Council reserves the right to carry out a DBS check on any independent committee members.
  5. Significant business dealings with the Council
  6. A formal connection with any political group
  7. An undischarged bankrupt
  8. An employee or the holder of a significant office in an organisation with close commercial links to the Council

The appointment is subject to it being approved by a meeting of Full Council.

The post will be fee paid and for the avoidance of doubt, a person appointed does not cease to be independent as a result of being paid any amounts by way of allowances or expenses in connection with performing the duties of the appointment.