

## AUDIT COMMITTEE INDEPENDENT MEMBER RECRUITMENT UPDATE

Audit Committee – 9 July 2024

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Finance and Trading

**Status:** For Decision

**Key Decision:** No

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Kevin Maskell

**Contact Officer:** Adrian Rowbotham, Ext. 7153

**Recommendation to Audit Committee:**

- (a) To appoint an Audit Committee Member from an opposition party to be a member of the interview panel together with the Audit Committee Chairman and Chief Officer – Finance and Trading.

### Introduction and Background

- 1 Within the Constitution of Sevenoaks District Council (Part 6 – Audit Committee, section 2.3) is the following:
- 2 *'The Audit Committee shall be entitled to recommend to Council the appointment of up to two additional co-opted non-voting members. Any co-opted members must have the necessary technical knowledge and skills to be of value to the business of the Committee.'*
- 3 A report on Audit Committee Independent Members was presented to the Audit Committee on 15 July 2021. At the meeting it was resolved that Officers and the Chairman of Audit Committee continue to investigate the value of an Independent Member and a report be brought back to the meeting in January 2022.
- 4 An update report was presented to the Audit Committee on 25 January 2022. At the meeting it was recommended to Council that up to two additional co-opted non-voting members be appointed, at a rate of remuneration similar to other Kent Districts, which may be reviewed after 1 year. The Committee were also supportive of working with Dartford BC on joint appointments.
- 5 At Council on 22 February 2022, it was resolved that the appointment of up to two additional co-opted non-voting members with an allowance of £800 per annum each, be agreed.

- 6 An interview process took place on 23 May 2022 when Mr Mo Chughtai and Lynda McMullan.
- 7 At the last Audit Committee on 16 April 2024, Lynda McMullan announced that she would be stepping down at the end of her term in May 2024

### **Terms of Office**

- 8 Both Independent Members were appointed for an initial term of one year which ended in May 2023.
- 9 Mo Chughtai's current term of office is until May 2025.
- 10 At the last Audit Committee, Members resolved that:
  - a) The terms of office for the new Independent Person be up to four years from the expiry of the current terms of office.
  - b) That the committee continue to operate with different terms for each Independent Member.

### **Recruitment to Vacant Independent Member Role**

- 11 Due to Lynda McMullan stepping down from the role, a new Independent Member is to be recruited.
- 12 The position will be advertised in the summer edition of the council's 'In Shape' magazine (see Appendix B) with a closing date of 11 August 2024.
- 13 The interviews will take place on a date to be confirmed with a panel consisting of:
  - Audit Committee Chairman.
  - An Audit Committee Member from an opposition party.
  - Chief Officer – Finance and Trading.
- 14 The interview will be designed to test that candidates have the necessary technical knowledge and skills to be of value to the business of the Committee.
- 15 The job description for this role is included at Appendix A.

### **Key Implications**

#### Financial

There are no additional financial implications resulting from the future terms of office as a decision was made by Council to have up to two Audit Committee Independent Members.

## Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Part 6 of the Constitution (as set out above) permits the Audit Committee to recommend the appointment of up to two additional co-opted non-voting members. Any such recommendation will be referred to the next meeting of Full Council for a final decision.

## Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

## Climate Change Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to tackle the challenge of climate change. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Audit Independent Member Job Description

### **Background Papers**

Audit Committee Independent Members report – Audit Committee 15 July 2021

Audit Committee Independent Members – Update report - Audit Committee 25 January 2022

Audit Committee Independent Members report – Council 22 February 2022

Audit Committee Independent Members Terms of Office – Audit Committee 28 March 2023

Audit Committee Independent Members Terms of Office – Audit Committee 16 April 2024

**Adrian Rowbotham**

**Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Finance & Trading**