



OFFICER REPORT TO COUNCIL

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

KEY ISSUE/DECISION:

A vacancy arose for an Independent Member to the Audit and Governance Committee when the former Independent Member stood down following the Audit and Governance Committee meeting on 13 March 2024. Recruitment to this post has been undertaken and the role has been offered. Council is asked to ratify the appointment of the Independent Member for a period of four years as detailed in the report.

BACKGROUND:

The Council at its meeting on 12 October 2021, agreed the principle of appointing an Independent Member to the Audit and Governance Committee for a period of four years. The Council also agreed that the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee, be delegated the authority to finalise the role description, skills, competencies and person specification.

The Committee's former Independent Member (Terry Price) was appointed on 8 February 2022. Mr Price decided to stand down from his role following the Audit and Governance Committee meeting on 13 March 2024. At that March meeting, the Audit and Governance Committee noted the recruitment process being undertaken to fill the vacancy and following an interview process, would recommend the preferred candidate to County Council to be appointed as the Independent Member to the Audit and Governance Committee.

RECRUITMENT PROCESS UNDERTAKEN:

A recruitment campaign has been conducted with an advertisement placed on Surrey County Council's website and all the usual recruitment websites used by the Council: Guardian Jobs, Surreyjobs, JobsGoPublic, Indeed, Find a Job (GOV) and LinkedIn. Applicants were asked to send a covering statement to express their interest and explain how they meet the desired requirements, together with a CV before the closing date.

A recruitment panel met to interview suitable candidates on 9 April 2024. The panel consisted of the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee (Victor Lewanski), one Conservative group member (Richard Tear), and two opposition group members (Steven McCormick and Will Forster) and was supported by the Director of Law and Governance. Following the interview process, members of the Audit and Governance Committee were updated on the outcome of the interviews.

CONFIRMATION OF SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE:

The recruitment panel agreed to offer the role to Matthew Woods and Mr Woods has confirmed that he would like to accept the role.

Mr Woods brings a wealth of experience to the role. He is a Risk Management and Internal Audit professional and has fifteen years' experience within the Financial Services industry. He is a fully qualified and chartered member of the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors holding CMIIA and CIA designations. In his current role at Link Group - Senior Internal Audit Manager, Corporate Markets, London, he heads-up an Internal Audit team in EMEA (Europe, Middle East, Africa). He is passionate about the third sector and has significant experience at Board and Audit committee level across multiple organisations and sectors.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council agrees to the appointment of Matthew Woods as the Independent Member of the Audit and Governance Committee for a period of four years.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Any costs associated with the recruitment, selection, appointment and subsequent disbursements to any Independent Member were met from within existing revenue service budgets. This is an unpaid appointment; the Independent Member will be able to claim travel expenses, which will be covered from the existing budget.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – MONITORING OFFICER:

A council's audit committee is established further to the Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000 and its purpose is to give assurance to elected Members and the public about the governance, financial reporting and performance of the Council. The appointment of a non-voting Independent Member on the Audit and Governance Committee will assist and promote good governance and scrutiny by the Committee and the Council.

RISK IMPLICATIONS:

Subject to adequate vetting procedures and adherence to the person specification, this initiative should augment the Audit and Governance Committee's independence, provide additional expertise, and provide an opportunity for the community to play an enhanced role in the governance of the Council.

Contact Officer:

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Sources/background papers:

Arrangements at other local authorities
CIPFA Guidance

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