

## Co-option of an Independent Non-Voting Member of the Audit & Accounts Committee

To: Audit & Accounts Committee

Meeting Date: 28th July 2023

From: Mairead Claydon, Head of Internal Audit and Risk Management

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: Not applicable

Outcome: At the meeting of the Audit & Accounts Committee on 22nd July 2022, it was resolved that the Committee would seek to appoint two co-opted independent (apolitical), non-voting Members. This was to be conducted via an open, advertised recruitment process, with a final recommendation to the Committee being made by a panel comprising the Chair, Vice-Chair and an Opposition Member, advised by chief officers.

Recommendation: Audit & Accounts Committee is requested to accept the recommendation of the interviewing panel and approve the co-option of Mohammed Hussain as an independent non-voting Member of the Audit & Accounts Committee.

### Officer contact:

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### Member contacts:

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 Part 3B of the Council's Constitution permits the Audit & Accounts Committee to appoint up to three people as non-voting co-opted members of the Committee. The Committee is to determine whether the appointments are for a specified period or for specific meetings or items. The co-opted person must have particular knowledge or expertise of the functions of the Committee and cannot be a member of any political party.
- 1.2 The CIPFA *Position Statement on Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police* represents professional advice to Councils on the role and functioning of effective audit committees. Although this is not statutory guidance with legislative force, it is helpful for the County Council to consider the statement and have regard to the advice. CIPFA state that effective Audit Committees are characterised by, amongst other things, a membership which is representative of the Council politically but which acts with balance, objectivity, independence of mind and with effective training and expertise. CIPFA recommend committees include an independent (or apolitical) member.
- 1.3 At the meeting of the Audit & Accounts Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2022, it was resolved that the Committee would seek to appoint two co-opted independent (apolitical), non-voting Members. This was to be conducted via an open, advertised recruitment process, with a final recommendation to the Committee being made by a panel comprising the Chair, Vice-Chair and an Opposition Member, advised by chief officers. Subsequently, at the meeting of Full Council on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022, it was agreed to accept the recommendation of the Independent Review Panel on Member's Allowances to pay an annual allowance of £1,500 to independent co-opted members of the Audit & Accounts Committee.

## 2. Outcome of the recruitment process

- 2.1 The role of independent co-opted member of the Audit & Accounts Committee was advertised from 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023 – 25<sup>th</sup> June 2023. A total of eight applications were received, and following shortlisting four candidates were invited to interview on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at New Shire Hall.
- 2.2 Following the interviews, the panel consisting of Cllr Wilson, Cllr Gay and Cllr Boden agreed to recommend the appointment of Mohammed Hussain to the position of independent co-opted member of the Audit & Accounts Committee.
- 2.3 The panel also proposed that a further recruitment process should be run in 2024/25 to seek the appointment of a second independent Member to the Committee.

## 3. Alignment with ambitions

- 3.1 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes
- 3.2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable
- 3.3 Health inequalities are reduced

- 3.4 People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs
- 3.5 Helping people out of poverty and income inequality
- 3.6 Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised
- 3.7 Children and young people have opportunities to thrive

## 5. Significant Implications

### 5.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications within this category. The independent co-opted Member will be entitled to an annual allowance of £1,500 plus travel costs. Budgetary provision for this cost has been set aside.

### 5.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category. The recommendation to appoint the independent co-opted Member follows an open recruitment process, with the opportunity advertised nationally.

### 5.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

As part of the response to Sir Tony Redmond's independent national review of the arrangements for local audit, on 31 May 2022, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) announced that it will legislate to make audit committees compulsory for all Councils and it will also require that at least one independent member be appointed to each audit committee. Although this reform is subject to the proviso "when parliamentary time allows", and there have been ministerial changes since 31 May 2022, the appointment of an independent co-opted Member to the Committee ensures that should such legislation be enacted, the Council would be compliant, and supports the Council's compliance with the best practice guidance set out in the CIPFA *Position Statement on Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police*.

### 5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category

### 5.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications within this category

### 5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category

### 5.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications in this category

## 5.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

There are no significant implications in this category

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?  
Not applicable

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement? Not applicable

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or Pathfinder Legal Services?  
Not applicable

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your EqIA Super User?  
Not applicable

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?  
Not applicable

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Not applicable

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?  
Not applicable

## 6. Source documents

### 6.1 Minutes of the Audit & Accounts Committee