

Independent Member

Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement Katherine Woodward, Head of Mid Kent Audit
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

The Constitution adopted by the Council at its meeting on 19th April 2023 makes provision for the co-option of an Independent Member to the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee. This report sets out a process for identifying and co-opting a suitable person to the Committee.

Purpose of Report

Decision.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee agrees the process set out in the report for co-opting an Independent Member to the Committee.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Audit Governance and Standards Committee	24 July 2023
Audit Governance and Standards Committee	13 November 2023
Council	6 December 2023

Independent Member

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities.</p>	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>There will be no material impact on these objectives.</p>	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement

Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The co-option of an independent member of the audit committee is authorised under the council's constitution. 	Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	No implications.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Crime and Disorder	No implications.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Procurement	No implications.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Constitution adopted by the Council at its meeting on 19th April 2023 makes provision for the co-option of an Independent Member to the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee. This is in line with best practice and with guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). This report sets out a process for identifying a suitable person to be co-opted to the Committee.
- 2.2 Note that the Independent Member will be in addition to the two Parish Representatives who already sit on the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee. Like the Parish Representatives, the Independent Member will not have voting rights.

- 2.3 A job description and person specification for the role has been prepared and is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.4 In recognition of the importance of the role, it is proposed that an allowance be paid to the Independent Member. Four other Kent districts have independent members on their Audit Committees and each pay an allowance, the annual amounts ranging from £800 to £840. It is recommended that Maidstone pays an allowance of £900. This is slightly more than our peers pay, but the premium is justified given that Maidstone is the largest borough council district in Kent. It is also the same amount as the allowance paid to Maidstone Borough Council's Independent Person, a separate role which nevertheless has features in common with this one.
- 2.5 In order to ensure that a wide range of potential candidates are alerted to the opportunity, it is proposed to advertise for the role on LinkedIn, PF Jobs and the Council's own website. Committee members are encouraged to alert members of their own professional networks to the opportunity.
- 2.6 A panel comprising the Chair, Vice-Chair, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement and Head of Mid-Kent Audit will meet to review applications for the role. A short list will be drawn up of no more than four candidates who meet the criteria set out in the job description and person specification. The panel will then meet the shortlisted candidates and select one candidate to recommend to the Committee for recommendation to the Council for co-option.
- 2.7 It is envisaged that this process will be carried out over the next three months, such that the recommended candidate may be put forward to the Committee at its meeting in November.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Option 1

The approach described above for the selection of a co-opted member is adopted.

3.2 Option 2

Members propose an alternative approach. Note that the Council's constitution requires that an independent member be co-opted to the Committee, so any alternative approach would still require this as an outcome.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the approach described above be adopted. It follows a widely accepted model for identifying suitable candidates and is consistent with best practice.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The overall impact of the course of action proposed in the report is likely to be to mitigate the risks faced by the Council, in that it will add an informed and independent element to the work of the Committee.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The proposal to co-opt an Independent Member was considered by Democracy and General Purposes Committee prior to Council adopting the current constitution, and was generally welcomed.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 See section 2 above.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Job description and Person Specification
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.