

Council – 27 February 2014

Appointment of Independent Members to Audit Committee

Summary of report

To recommend to Council that Mrs P Hepburn and Mr F Bell be appointed as Independent Members to the Audit Committee with effect from the start of the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

Background papers

Reports to / minutes of Audit Committee 12 June 2012, 3 September 2012, 24 June 2012 and Council 24 September 2012.

Recommendations

That Council be recommended to appoint Mrs P Hepburn and Mr F Bell as Independent Members to the Audit Committee with effect from the start of the 2014/15 Municipal Year and with a two-year 'Term of Office'.



James T Walsh
Chief Finance Officer
21 January 2014

1. Background

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Audit Committee on the 3rd September 2012, it was agreed that the number of independent members serving on the Audit Committee be increased from 1 to 3. This was subsequently ratified by Council on the 24 September 2012 and the Council's constitution was amended.
- 1.2 An initial recruitment campaign was commenced in February 2013. While one candidate was interviewed by an interview panel on 10 May 2013, the panel made a recommendation not to appoint. Audit Committee were updated of this in a report to them on 24 June 2013.
- 1.3 A further recruitment campaign was undertaken in November 2013. Adverts were placed in the Walsall Advertiser and Walsall jobsite website. This attracted significant interest from potential candidates.

- 1.4 An interview panel met on 18 December 2013 and interviewed 7 short listed candidates for the 2 vacant positions of Independent Member to the Audit Committee.
- 1.5 The interview panel unanimously resolved that Mrs P Hepburn and Mr F Bell be recommended to Council for formal appointment to the position of Independent Members to the Audit Committee, subject to Council's agreement.
- 1.6 Mrs Hepburn has worked in Local Government for a number of years in a variety of roles.
- 1.7 Mr Bell is a fellow of the Institute of Secretaries and Administrators and has held a number of roles in public sector organisations including Non Executive Director for the NHS, Employment Tribunal Member and Chair of Walsall Housing Group. He has also been Independent Member sitting on the standards committee at South Staffordshire and Sandwell Councils, and has held the position of Chair of the Audit Committee and the Risk Management Committee at Walsall PCT.

2. Resource and legal considerations

- 2.1 The appointment of Independent Members would incur eligible travel and subsistence expenses, which can be met from within existing budgets.
- 2.2 Independent lay members to the Audit Committee do not have voting rights in accordance with Section 13 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

3. Performance and risk management issues

- 3.1 Suitably qualified and experienced Independent Members serving on Audit Committees can bring specialist knowledge and insight to the workings and deliberations of the Committee which, when partnered with elected members' knowledge of working practices and procedures, enhances the performance of the Committee.

4. Equality Implications

- 4.1 The appointment process as detailed above actively encouraged applicants from a diversity of backgrounds.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with officers from Democratic Services.

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