

AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

REPORT TO:	Audit Committee		
DATE:	15 June 2026		
TITLE:	Appointment of Independent Persons		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Update		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Audit Committee Chair – Councillor T De Winton		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Interim Assistant Director (Finance) – Carl Holland		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

<p>PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:</p> <p>To recommend the appointment of two Independent Persons to support the Council's governance arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements and best practice.</p>
<p>KEY ISSUES:</p> <p>CIPFA position statement 2022, Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police has been updated to stipulate the following: 'where there is no legislative direction to include co-opted independent members, CIPFA recommends that each authority audit committee should include at least two co-opted independent members to provide appropriate technical expertise.</p> <p>Independent Persons play a key role in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the ethical governance framework • Providing impartial and independent views • Enhancing public confidence in standards arrangements <p>The Council's current arrangements allow for the appointment of up to two Independent Persons.</p> <p>Co-opted independent Members to the Audit Committee have no voting rights, but will have the following responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to meetings by offering challenge, objectivity, insight and feedback in a politically neutral manner • Apply experience in audit, risk and governance to support the Audit Committee's functions • Applying relevant skills and experiences to add value and depth to the work of the Audit Committee. • Abide by the Council's Code of Conduct and the Nolan Seven Principles of Public Life (highlighting in particular: integrity and accountability) <p>A recruitment exercise was undertaken in accordance with the Council's approved procedures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public advertisement of the role • Assessment against agreed criteria • Interview by a member/officer panel

The recruitment process was undertaken in line with the Council's equalities policies and ensured fair and open competition. Applicants must not:

- Be an elected member or officer of the Council or have been in the past five years.
- Be related or have a close connection to a current Councillor or officer.
- Have been convicted of an offence resulting in imprisonment of 3 months or more.
- Be bankrupt or have outstanding Council debts.
- Have commercial interests with the Council or links to political groups.
- Have significant business dealings with the Council.

The roles attract an allowance of £242 per meeting, which is already provided for within existing budgets.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

Following interviews and liaison with the Audit Committee chair, it is proposed that the below two named individuals are nominated as

Both candidates demonstrated:

- Strong understanding of ethical standards
- Independence from the Council (as required by legislation)
- The skills and judgement necessary to fulfil the role effectively

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1.1 That the Audit Committee appoints:

Michael Laird as Independent Person
Sean Beckett as Independent Person

for a term of up to four years commencing on the first meeting following agreement approval of this decision.

1.2 That delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director (Finance) Officer to make any necessary administrative arrangements to formalise the appointments.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To meet the CIPFA recommended practice for Audit Committees.