

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Joint Audit and Standards Committee	REPORT NUMBER: JAC/23/21
FROM: John Snell - Corporate Manager – Internal Audit	DATE OF MEETING: 29 January 2024

BRIEFING NOTE: APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT CO-OPTED MEMBER TO THE JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Currently the Councils' Joint Audit and Standards Committee is purely made up of elected councillors, based on the political balance.
- 1.2 Although not a legislative requirement, best practice and a '2022 position statement' by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) endorsed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities recommended that audit committees in local government should include two co-opted independent members to provide appropriate technical expertise, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and knowledge base of such committees.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The Corporate Manager – Internal Audit to prepare a paper for JASC in May 2024 to discuss the option of including co-opted members into the committee's membership with the following options:
- 2.2 Option 1 – Do nothing. Whilst CIPFA guidance recognises that it is good practice for Audit Committees to include co-opted members, it is not dictated by legislation. This option assumes that the Committee may feel that it already has the skills and technical expertise to fully fulfil its terms of reference.
- 2.3 Option 2 – Agree to include co-opted membership to the committee at the earliest opportunity, to supplement the experience of the current elected members.

3. FURTHER CONSIDERATION IF OPTION 2 IS APPROVED

- A paper should be presented to Full Councils to support this change to the JASC's constitution.
- Co-opted members would be full voting members of the committee whilst operating as an advisory committee (i.e. making recommendations rather than setting policy). There would be no voting rights where the Council has delegated decisions to the committee such as, for instance, Code of Conduct matters. Co-opted members would be treated equally to elected members in terms of access to support and information. Good practice suggests that the term of co-opted members should be in line with the elected members terms, and should generally not exceed two-terms to ensure that fresh ideas, perspectives and experience are injected into the committee on a semi-regular basis.

- The skills that candidates should be able to demonstrate would include analytical skills, effective communication, scrutiny and challenge, open mindedness and capable of developing good teamwork and effective relationships with other members of the committee. The Corporate Manager will present in May 2024 a draft description and advert for the Committees comment and approval.
- The Independent Remuneration Panel will need to be convened to determine the appropriate allowance.
- The membership of the interview panel would need to be agreed, but good practice would suggest that this should be made up of both Chairs and one other member. Officers would provide human resource and administrative support and process. Recommendations for appointment would be made on merit and ability judged against the job description.