

Blaby District Council

Audit & Corporate Governance Committee

Date of Meeting	10 October 2023
Title of Report	Appointment of Independent Members to the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee
Report Author	Executive Director (Section 151 Officer)

1. What is this report about?

- 1.1 To seek approval to recommend to Council the appointment of an Independent Member to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.

2. Recommendation(s) to Council

- 2.1 That members of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee recommend to Council that Helen King is appointed as an Independent Member to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.

3. Reason for Decision(s) Recommended

- 3.1 It is best practice for an Independent Member to be appointed to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee. The recruitment process was designed to ensure that the successful candidate held the required skills to be appointed.

4. Matters to consider

4.1 Background

Members of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee will recall the report brought to the Committee on 13 July 2023 detailing the contents of the CIPFA Position Statement regarding Audit Committees.

Included in the report was an Action Plan which detailed actions to be taken by the Committee in order to take into account the Guidance provided within the CIPFA Position Statement. An action within the plan listed the appointment of Independent Members to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and this report provides the outcome of the process to recruit to these positions.

Independent Members will be expected to actively participate in meetings of the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee and demonstrate independence, integrity, objectivity and impartiality in their decision-making. As part of this rewarding role, they will support the Council's Audit & Corporate Governance Committee in providing independent assurance to the members of Blaby District Council, and its wider citizens and stakeholders.

Independent Members are non-voting members of the Committee, who assist in overseeing internal and external audit arrangements, reviewing and scrutinising financial statements, and reviewing and assessing the governance, risk management and control of the authority.

Recruitment Process

The recruitment process and selection criteria was produced after consultation with a small working group of members of the Audit & Governance Committee. The selection criteria are detailed below:

Selection Criteria

The ideal candidate for the position will:

1. Be willing and able to commit the necessary time to the role;
2. Have up to date skills, knowledge and experience within at least one of the fields covered within Audit & Corporate Governance Committee, i.e. internal audit, risk management, governance, accounting, anti-fraud and corruption;
3. Have good interpersonal skills, including good communication skills both written and oral and the ability to co-operate with others in a committee setting.
4. Have independence of mind, objectivity and impartiality.
5. Contribute proactive, proportionate, independent thought and listen to, and balance, advice;
6. Have a commitment to the general principles governing the conduct of Councillors generally and work to high behavioural standards, demonstrating honesty, probity and integrity;
7. Not be a serving local government officer or councillor;
8. Have no personal, legal or contractual relationship with Blaby District Council (including employees or Members or former staff), or any other relationship / activity which might represent a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest.

Desirable additional criteria:

1. A suitable professional or management qualification (in internal audit, risk management, governance, accounting or other relevant discipline)
2. An understanding of the complexity of issues surrounding audit, risk management, governance and finance in local government.
3. An understanding of the Council's vision, priorities and objectives

4. An ability to understand complex situations and reports, as well as the statutory background to those reports, and ask appropriate questions of officers.
5. Have a broad range of experience, possibly in public, private, voluntary or charitable sector employment or service including self-employed, employed and voluntary positions.
6. Promotes the work of Audit & Corporate Governance Committee and areas falling under its terms of reference;
7. Have a connection with Blaby District, e.g. resident, workplace, own a business etc.

Independence

A person can only be an independent person if that person:

- Is not a member, co-opted member or officer of the authority, or has been within the last 5 years;
- Is not a member, co-opted member or officer of a parish council of which the authority is the principal authority, or has been within the last 5 years;
- Is not a relative or close friend, of a person within (a) and (b);
- Has submitted an application form in response to an advert for the position at the authority;
- In addition to be eligible for appointment, a person must not be disqualified from holding office as a Member of the Council. Accordingly, any person who is recommended for appointment will be required to confirm that he/she is not disqualified.

A preference for candidates who have either lived or worked within the District or have a connection to the District was also asked to be demonstrated within the recruitment process.

The position was advertised on the Council's website and social media channels. There was a positive response to the advertisement and three applications were received and all candidates were interviewed.

The interviews were undertaken by the Vice Chair of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee (Cllr. Mike Shirley) assisted by Cllr Holdridge and the Executive Director (S151 Officer), (Sarah Pennelli).

Through the interview process Helen King demonstrated that they fully met all the requirements of the person criteria and would bring appropriate expertise to the committee. The interview panel were unanimous in their decision on the recommendation to the Committee and Council. The appointment will be subject to satisfactory references being obtained.

4.2 Proposal(s)

It is recommended by the interview panel that the Audit Committee make the recommendation to Council to appoint Helen King as an Independent Member of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.

The Independent Member will be appointed for a two-year period with an option to extend for a further two years.

Helen King has significant experience of Audit Committees, governance and public sector accountancy; holding the position of Statutory S151 Officer in the past three organisations for which she has worked. The panel were unanimous in their decision to recommend her appointment as an Independent Member to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.

Whilst there was an opportunity to appoint two Independent Members to the Committee the panel only appointed to the one position at this time given the applicants that had come forward.

It is proposed that the Committee consider whether to go out to recruitment a further Independent Member at a future date.

4.3 Relevant Consultations

Members of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee involved in the process

4.4 Significant Issues

None

5. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?

5.1 There are no costs arising from this report

6. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?

6.1

Current Risk	Actions to reduce the risks
That the persons appointed do not hold sufficient skills to act in the capacity of an Independent Member.	Criteria has been set during the recruitment process and through the interview process to ensure that candidates have the required skills and circumstances to be in a position to act as an Independent Member of the Committee.
Risk of not appointing independent members to the Committee and therefore not being compliant with best practice.	The recruitment process has been put in place to ensure compliance with best practice. Should the recruitment exercise not be successful a further process will be looked into in order to appoint to the independent positions.

7. Other options considered

7.1 None

8. Other significant issues

8.1 In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Legal Matters, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities, and Climate Local and there are no areas of concern.

9. Appendix

9.1 None

10. Background paper(s)

None

11. Report author's contact details

Sarah Pennelli Executive Director (S151 Officer)
Sarah.Pennelli@blaby.gov.uk 0116 272 7650