

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE
DATE: 16TH NOVEMBER 2022
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE
AUTHOR: ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT AUDIT
COMMITTEE MEMBER

Purpose of Report

1. To enable Members to decide upon the appointment of an Independent Audit Committee Member.

Recommended: That

- [1] Mrs Suzanne Horrill be appointed to the role of Independent Audit Committee Member for Cheshire Fire Authority for a period of three years (until November 2025); and
- [2] Mr Mark Day be approved to become an Independent Audit Committee Member should the role become vacant, or an additional role be created.

Background

1. The External Auditor made the following recommendation:

We recommend that the Authority consider establishing a separate Audit Committee and to consider appointing an independent member with a suitable financial background as recommended by the Redmond review.

2. The Fire Authority considered a report about this on 27th April 2022 and agreed that the appointment of the Independent Audit Committee Member be carried out by the Governance and Constitution Committee (with details of the appointment, e.g. remuneration, settled by that Committee).
3. The Committee considered a report on 12th July 2022 in relation to the appointment of the Independent Audit Committee Member and resolved that:

[1] *the bullet points contained in Paragraphs 13 and 14 of the report be approved for inclusion in the recruitment pack;*

[2] *the Independent Audit Member receive an annual allowance of £1,250;*

- [3] *the Independent Audit Member serve a 3 year term with the option to 'renew' once;*
- [4] *the recruitment of the Independent Audit Member be advertised through an open advert on the Service's website with the monitoring officers of the local public bodies that have audit committees with Independent Audit Members being notified to encourage them to inform suitable individuals about the role;*
- [5] *the interview panel for the Independent Audit Member consist of two Members appointed to the Audit Committee; and*
- [6] *the recruitment paperwork shall state that the Authority may consider appointing a second Independent Audit Member in the future.*

Information

4. The role of Independent Audit Committee Member was advertised by an open advert on the Service's website. In addition, Monitoring Officers of the local public bodies that have audit committees were asked to inform their independent audit members; and an advertisement was put on LinkedIn.
5. Two applications were received: from Mr Mark Day; and from Mrs Suzanne Horrill.

Mrs Horrill

6. Mrs Horrill has worked as an internal auditor in the private and public sector for Transport for Greater Manchester and NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups. She has audit committee experience working as an Independent Audit Committee Member for Progress Housing Group as well as experience working with Mersey Internal Audit Agency and Grant Thornton.

Mr Day

7. Mr Day has worked in various senior leadership roles for the NHS. He currently works as a Non-Executive and Senior Independent Director for Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospital and an Audit Committee Independent Lay Member for Cornwall Council. He is also a member of the Council of The Charter Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

Interviews

8. A panel consisting of two Members from the Audit Committee, Cllrs Nick Mannion and Cllr Rachel Bailey, the Monitoring Officer and Treasurer interviewed the two applicants on 18th October 2022.

9. The panel recognised from the outset that both applications described two strong applicants. The interviews reinforced this view with both applicants providing good answers to the questions asked by the panel.
10. After some deliberation, Members decided that both candidates were capable and suitable for the role of Independent Audit Committee Member. Members decided that they wished to appoint Mrs Horrill to the role. They also decided that it was appropriate to ask Mr Day if he would be willing to take on the role in the future if/when an additional Independent Audit Committee Member was required or should Mrs Horrill be unable to continue in role.

Financial Implications

11. The role of Independent Audit Committee Member will attract an allowance of £1,274.16 and the individual will be entitled to travel expenses. This will be met from within existing budgets.

Legal Implications

12. CIPFA recommends, in its Position Statement, that audit committees should include co-opted members to provide appropriate technical expertise. Although the creation of an audit committee with co-opted members is not legal requirements, it is likely that it will become so in the not-too-distant future.
13. In this instance the Independent Audit Committee Member is not being co-opted, at this stage. Mrs Horrill will not be a voting member of the Audit Committee. This position will be reviewed at a later date.

Equality and Diversity Implications

14. There are no equality and diversity implication arising from this report.

Environmental Implications

15. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: