

Co-opting non-elected independent members

Report number:	PAS/WS/24/013	
Report to and date(s):	Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	30 May 2024
Cabinet member:	Councillor Peter Armitage Chair of Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee Email: peter.armitage@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Rachael Mann Director Resources and Property Section 151 Officer Tel: 01638 719245 Email: rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This item is not required to be included in the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: All wards

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Approves the proposed Person Specification at Appendix A and the timeline at Appendix B.**
- 2. Approves the recruitment approach set out at section 2.4 of this report.**

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 In January 2024, the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee considered report number PAS/WS/24/004 which set out proposals regarding the co-opting of non-elected independent members to this committee. At this meeting the committee:
- agreed the principle of co-opting two non-elected members to this committee; and
 - approved the approach, including the next steps, to co-opting independent members as set out in that report
- 1.2 The co-opted independent members will:
- be expected to attend the meetings of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to provide an independent perspective and to give advice to the Committee based on their knowledge and experience
 - not be able to vote on any items considered by the Committee
 - be politically independent
 - be bound by the Code of Conduct in the Constitution
 - be appointed for a four-year term, and may serve for a maximum of two terms of four years. This approach is consistent with Suffolk County Council and would provide some continuity for the committee between elected administrations.
- 1.3 The next steps as set out in the January 2024 report to PASC were as follows:
- The Constitution Review Group be requested to advise the Council on the necessary amendments to the constitution to provide for two non-voting Independent Members to be appointed on a term not exceeding four years.
 - The Independent Remuneration Panel be invited to advise the Council of an appropriate rate of remuneration for the role.
 - The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee considers the recruitment process, recruitment pack and appointment of an interview panel at a future meeting (anticipated May 2024).
 - The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to co-opt the independent members at their meeting in September 2024 following a successful recruitment process.
- 1.4 This report sets out the progress made against the above next steps and seeks approval for the recruitment process, recruitment pack, and appointment of an interview panel. The recruitment pack is included as appendices to this report and comprises a Person Specification (**Appendix A**) and a timeline for the recruitment process (**Appendix B**).

2. **Proposals within this report**

- 2.1 The Constitution Review Group has advised the Council on the necessary amendments to the constitution to provide for two non-voting Independent Members to be appointed on a term not exceeding four years. The Council duly considered and approved these amendments at its meeting on 26 March 2024 [COU/WS/24/008](#).
- 2.2 The Independent Remuneration Panel has advised the Council of an appropriate rate of remuneration for the role. The Council considered this and agreed a rate of £300 per annum retainer and £100 per attendance (meeting/training/etc) plus travel, at its meeting on 14 May 2024.
- 2.3 The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and approve the proposed Person Specification at **Appendix A** and the timeline at **Appendix B** for the two co-opted non-elected independent members for this committee.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the co-opted persons will be appointed by the committee at its September 2024 meeting and a recruitment process (consisting of an advert being issued and interested individuals being asked to complete an appropriate application process) will therefore be required for a recommendation to be made to the committee. It is further proposed that the interview panel will undertake the interviews and be made up of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, supported by the Chief Executive, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.
- 2.5 The Performance and Audit Scrutiny committee is asked to consider and approve this recruitment approach set out in paragraph 2.4.

3. **Alternative options that have been considered**

- 3.1 Whilst there is no legislative direction to include co-opted independent Members, CIPFA's Position Statement 2022 recommends that each local authority audit committee should include at least two Co-opted Independent Members to provide appropriate technical expertise. The Position Statement is supported by The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Home Office.

4. **Consultation and engagement undertaken**

- 4.1 Engagement with this committee on the recruitment process and documentation is a key part of the overall co-opting process.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 There is a risk that the Committee will be unable to appoint non-elected independent members with a sufficient level of knowledge and expertise to support the committee. This risk can be mitigated with a robust recruitment process with detailed documentation regarding the role.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

- 6.1 Financial - An allowance and expenses will be payable to the co-opted Independent Members on the Committee and this would need to be included in future budget setting processes.

7. Appendices referenced in this report

- 7.1 Appendix A - proposed person specification
7.2 Appendix B – proposed timeline for recruitment process

8. Background documents associated with this report

- 8.1 [Government response to local audit framework: technical consultation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/government-response-to-local-audit-framework-technical-consultation)
- 8.2 National Audit office AO report 2019 [Local Authority governance \(nao.org.uk\)](https://www.nao.org.uk/publications/2019/07/local-authority-governance/)
- 8.3 Report number [PAS/WS/24/004](#) to Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee 25 January 2024