

**REPORT TO:** FULL COUNCIL

**DATE:** 16 SEPTEMBER 2021

**TITLE:** INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT

**LEAD OFFICER(S):** SIMON FREEMAN, HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROPERTY AND DEPUTY TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (01279) 446228

**CONTRIBUTING OFFICER:** SARAH MARSH, INTERNAL AUDIT MANAGER (01279) 446884

**RECOMMENDED that:**

- A** Laura Kirman is appointed as the independent member of the Audit and Standards Committee

**BACKGROUND**

1. At its 11 September 2019 meeting the Audit and Standards Committee agreed to appoint an independent person to the Committee as recommended by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in their guidance, 'Audit Committee: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police', published in 2018. This asks local councils to consider the inclusion of at least one independent member.
2. Following a recruitment campaign, interviews for the position of independent person took place in January 2020, however, none of the candidates were successful.
3. The recruitment campaign was relaunched and three candidates were interviewed on 23 August 2021. The interview panel consisted of three members of the Audit and Standards Committee (Councillors Eddie Johnson, Jean Clark and Simon Carter), supported by the Section 151 Officer and the Internal Audit Manager.
4. The interview panel were unanimous in their decision to appoint Laura Kirman to the position, subject to Full Council approval.
5. Laura Kirman brings many years' experience of working in local government and lives locally.

## **ISSUES/PROPOSALS**

6. The Term of Office for an independent member of the Audit and Standards Committee is three years. After their first term has expired, they can be appointed again if they wished for a second term unopposed; however, if they wished to serve further terms after this then their further appointment has to be subject to a competitive selection process.
7. The allowance to be awarded to the successful applicant is based on benchmarking data and is equivalent to the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Vice Chair of the Council, being £510 per year. This is, however, dependent on Full Council approval and their annual review thereafter.
8. In addition, reasonable expenses can be claimed in line with Member's subsistence, travelling and carer's allowances as per part 6 (Councillor's allowance scheme) of the Council's constitution.
9. The independent member of the Audit and Standards Committee will have to publicly declare and register any interest they have on the same basis as members of Harlow Council and observe the requirements of the Council's Constitution in performance of their duties in their capacity as an independent member.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)**

None specific.

**Author: Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning**

### **Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)**

As contained within the report.

**Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Property and Deputy to the Chief Executive**

### **Housing**

None specific.

**Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing**

### **Community Wellbeing**

None specific.

**Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing**

### **Governance (Includes HR)**

There is no legal or constitutional requirement for the Committee to have an independent person on the Audit and Standards Committee, however, it is considered good practice to do so.

**Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance**

**Appendices**

None.

**Background Papers**

None.

**Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

None