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To: Governance and Audit Committee – April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021

Subject: Training Programme for Governance and Audit Committee Members

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: This report provides further detail on the training programme proposed for Members of the Governance and Audit Committee

### **FOR DECISION**

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1. During the past four year electoral cycle, the role and importance of the Governance and Audit Committee has developed as local government changes to meet its new operating environment.
2. The challenges faced by organisations such as Kent County Council are evidenced by the reports into Croydon Council, Bristol City Council, Nottingham City Council, Northamptonshire County Council and Liverpool City Council. They are also clearly evidenced in the discussions held by the Committee and the Annual Governance Statement considered and agreed in October 2021.
3. Over the past four years, the Council has had the benefit of committed and dedicated Members who have understood and developed the role of the Committee. In doing so, they have developed their own understanding of key issues and principles and supplemented that with training from the Corporate Director of Finance, the Head of Internal Audit, External Audit and the General Counsel.
4. In many cases with the current Committee, Members have also brought with them their relevant experience from their private or working lives that has helped them serve the Council. The Council has also successfully added an independent Member who has supported the expertise of elected Members.
5. The planned programme for the year ahead includes a range of key governance activity that includes:
  - a. Governance reset to clarify the roles and responsibilities of those within the KCC Governance infrastructure
  - b. Rewrite of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance
  - c. Review of the governance addressing the relationship between KCC and companies in which the council holds a significant interest
  - d. Rewrite of the Financial Regulations

- e. Further changes to the Constitution
  - f. Refreshed terms of reference for all Committees
6. As the primary corporate governance committee, the Governance and Audit Committee will have a key role to play in relation to all of these planned activities. The Committee will also continue with their standing agenda and the activity that will undoubtedly follow in reviewing the key unprecedented delivery activity of the past twelve months including (but not limited to) COVID-19 and the arrangements for transition from membership of the EU.
  7. As discussed in January, it is therefore vital that the training provided to Members of the Committee ensures that the Committee is able to undertake its role effectively. This will present a considerable time commitment for any Member wishing to be part of the Committee and it is strongly recommended that the training programme is made mandatory for all Members. Whilst Members may bring expertise from their personal and professional lives, it is a clear learning point from the reports highlighted in paragraph 2 above that appropriate and organised training is needed.
  8. Similarly, as the Committee recognised at the January meeting, the training provided needs to come from a diverse range of sources. Accordingly, whilst the professional advisors to this Committee (General Counsel, Head of Internal Audit and Corporate Director of Finance alongside External Audit) will continue to provide training, that will be supported by investing in external providers and training opportunities for Members.
  9. Members are asked to discuss the time commitment involved which is likely to be at least one full day per month in addition to the increasing requirements for consideration of papers for the meeting.
  10. The programme itself will begin with an informal (in person) kick off meeting after the new Members are appointed to the Committee by relevant parties and before the first Committee meeting. This will agree informally the full programme for the year ahead (to September 2022) and that will then be brought for approval in July 2021 at this Committee.
  11. The programme will include:
    - a. An introduction to the work of local government Governance and Audit Committees from CIPFA
    - b. Workshops from external governance professionals
    - c. Training on the KCC Constitution and Financial Regulations
    - d. External training on pensions and investments held by KCC
    - e. External training on company ownership
    - f. Information Governance training
    - g. External training on the operation, governance and board behaviours of successful organisations
    - h. "Governance Failure" training and how to avoid it
    - i. Training on the role of Internal Audit, Finance and Legal

**Recommendation:**

The Committee is invited to discuss the paper and:

- a. NOTE and COMMENT on the report
- b. AGREE that the Governance and Audit training programme should be mandatory for Committee Members

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Appendix 1 – Liverpool Report

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