

From: Ben Watts, General Counsel

To: Governance and Audit Committee, 24 September 2025

Subject: Independent Member Term of Office Review

Status: Unrestricted

1. Introduction

- a) In January 2019, this Committee approved the principle of appointing an independent member for a two-year trial. Following further consideration and a recruitment exercise, Dr David Horne was appointed and added to the Membership of the Committee in October 2019. Due to the timings of meetings, the Committee formally noted his appointment at its January 2020 meeting.
- b) In July 2021, the appointment was extended by a further two years and in July 2023 this was extended again by a further two years. In July 2023 the Committee also agreed to appoint a second independent member, with Camila Black being subsequently appointed.
- c) As Dr Horne's extension will come to an end in October this year it is an appropriate time to review this matter and update the Committee ahead of a recruitment exercise.

2. Background

- d) There is no legislative requirement for a local authority audit committee to have a co-opted independent member (although it is a requirement for authorities in Wales and combined authorities in England). CIPFA recommends having two co-opted members as best practice.
- e) As set out in the CIPFA publication "Audit committees: practical guidance for local authorities and police" (2022 edition), the reasons for this recommendation are as follows:
 - To supplement the knowledge and experience of elected representatives in specific areas, such as audit or financial reporting.
 - To provide continuity outside the political cycle. This is of particular importance where membership of the committee changes annually or because of elections.
 - To help achieve a non-political focus on governance, risk, and control matters.
 - Having two co-opted members rather than one will allow recruitment of members with different but complementary knowledge and experience, increase the resilience and continuity of the committee.
 - Having two co-opted members shows a commitment to supporting and investing in the committee.

- f) The terms of reference of this Committee allows up to two co-opted members to be appointed. As co-opted members cannot vote on council policy under s.13 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, these are non-voting roles.

3. Next Steps

- a) To ensure stability and continuity in the Committee during the consideration of key reports in the autumn, the Committee are advised to agree the extension of Dr Horne's term to the end of the current financial year (31 March 2026).
- b) During this period of extension, a recruitment exercise will be carried out with the aim to appoint a new independent member for the start of the new financial year. The appointment would be for a four year term. Having non-concurrent terms for the two independent members is to help ensure that there is at least one in post.
- c) The person specification for the role is set out in the Appendix. This is the same version of the specification agreed in 2023.
- d) A Member Panel comprising the Chair and two Committee Members will conduct the interviews and make the appointment, supported by officers. At least one officer with the appropriate technical expertise will be present during the interviews.

4. Recommendation

- a) The Governance and Audit Committee AGREE to the extension of Dr Horne's term of office as Independent Member to the end of March 2026.
- b) The Governance and Audit Committee NOTE that a recruitment exercise will be carried out.

5. Background Documents

[Appointment of an Independent Member.pdf](#)

6. Report Author and Relevant Director

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