

Report title: Appointment of Independent Member	
Report to: Audit Governance and Standards Committee	
Report author: Paul Turner, Director, Legal and Assurance	
Date: 16 November 2020	For: Approval
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County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Purpose of Report

This report asks the Audit Governance and Standards committee to approve the appointment of an Independent Member to the Committee.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee appoints Atta Ul Haque as an Independent Member of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee from 16 November 2020 for a term of four years.
- 2.2 That Mr Ul Haque's appointment be subject to completion of an induction programme.

3. Background

- 3.1 At its meeting on 14 July 2020, Full Council agreed to the appointment of an Independent Member to the Audit Governance and Standards Committee in line with current best practice and as recently recommended by Sir Tony Redmond in his report 'Independent review into the oversight of local audit and the transparency of local authority financial reporting'.

4. The Recruitment Process

- 4.1 A recruitment campaign began in week commencing 21 September 2020, with an advertisement placed on the 'Working for Essex' website and all usual recruitment websites used by ECC. It was shared on Essex County Council's Democracy Twitter feed and the social media outlets (LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter).
- 4.2 Information packs were prepared and sent to those persons who had shown an interest in applying for the position. Applicants were requested to submit a supporting statement setting out how they met the criteria within the person specification, and their curriculum vitae. At the closing date for applications on the 4 October 2020, four applications had been received.

- 4.3 A recruitment panel was convened to interview suitable candidates. The panel consisted of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee and Councillor Anne Turrell. The panel appointed a technical advisor, Stephanie Mitchener, Director, Finance.
- 4.4 The recruitment panel agreed to interview three candidates. Interviews were held on 6 November 2020.
- 4.6 After careful consideration of the relative strengths and experiences of the candidates, as indicated by their curriculum vitae, supporting documentation and by interview, the recruitment panel agreed to recommend to the Audit Governance and Standards Committee that Atta Ul Haque be appointed to the position of Independent Member on the Committee. Mr Ul Haque has been an independent banking consultant since 2014 and before that he previously worked for Deloitte and KPMG. He is a Fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 This is an unpaid appointment and there are no financial implications other than that the independent member will be entitled to claim travel expenses.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Audit Governance and Standards Committee is a key way in which the Council provides assurance that it is providing value for money and has proper systems of control. Without effective assurance Councillors will not know that the Council is effectively carrying out its statutory duties. The addition of an Independent Member to the Committee will provide additional expertise and is early compliance with the recommendation of the Redmond Review.

7. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 7.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when ECC makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. Equality and diversity matters have been considered in the production of the progress report.

8. List of Appendices

None

9. List of background papers

Role profile, advertisement

Applications and interview notes include personal data and are not therefore background papers.