

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Audit Committee – 09 January 2024

**Report Title**

Audit Committee – Appointment of an Independent Member

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

**Report Author(s)**

Emma Hill, Head of Democratic Services

[Emma.hill@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:Emma.hill@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

On 19 July 2023, Council resolved to amend the Audit Committee Terms of Reference to include provision for a second independent member. Prior to this, the Committee was comprised of five Councillors and one independent person.

Following the amendment to the Terms of Reference, a recruitment exercise had been undertaken. This report is submitted for the Audit Committee to recommend that the Council appoints Alison Hutchinson until January 2028 (4 year term).

The term of the current independent member, John Barber will expire in 2024. During the recruitment exercise a second candidate was also considered to be suitable for the role. This report recommends that Michael Olugbenga-Babalola is appointed to the role when the current independent member's term expires.

**Recommendations**

1. That Council be asked to note the appointment of Alison Hutchinson as an Independent Member of the Audit Committee until January 2028 (4 year term).
2. That Council be asked to note the appointment of Michael Olugbenga-Babalola as an Independent Member of the Audit Committee for a term of 4 years upon cessation of the term of the current independent member, John Barber.

**List of Appendices Included**

None

**Background Papers**

[Report - Annual Review and Adoption of the Consultation - Council - 19 July 2023](#)  
[Audit Committee Terms of Reference](#)

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

Council – 17 January 2024

**Council Approval Required**

Yes

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Appointment of Independent Members of the Audit Committee**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 In 2015, the Council amended the Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee to include provision for the appointment of an Independent Member.
- 1.2 At its meeting on 14 March 2023, the Audit Committee approved proposals to recommend to Council amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Committee. This was considered following updates to the CIPFA Guidance for audit committees and these recommendations were adapted for this Council.

### **2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 Following the change to the Terms of Reference, a recruitment process was undertaken. Two candidates were considered suitable for the role. One role is currently occupied by John Barber, whose term will cease in 2024.
- 2.2 Alison Hutchinson and Michael Olugbenga-Babalola are considered to have the appropriate skills and experience required of independent members of the Audit Committee.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1 Option 1  
Appoint Alison Hutchinson to the vacant position– this is the recommended option as a thorough recruitment process was undertaken and Alison was a successful candidate. Appoint Michael Olugbenga-Babalola as the second independent member, to take up the role once John Barber’s term of office ceases.
- 3.2 Option 2  
Refuse to appoint – this is not recommended as the Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee require two Independent Persons on the membership. Refusal to appoint either candidate would mean that the Council would have to restart the recruitment process.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 There has been no consultation on this proposal.

### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 If Audit Committee resolve to recommend the appointment to Council, the report will be presented for Council approval on 17 January 2024.
- 5.2 If approved by Council in January 2024, the decision would be implemented with immediate effect.

5.3 The Head of Democratic Services is responsible for actioning the appointment.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

6.1 The allowance for the Independent Members of the Audit Committee is £745 per annum and is already included in the budget for Member Allowances. Any costs associated with the recruitment of an Independent Member have been met within existing budgets. There are no further financial or procurement implications associated with this proposal.

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

7.1 There are no legal implications associated with this proposal beyond ensuring that the Council complies with the provisions of the Constitution, which is discussed earlier in this report.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 There are no Human Resources implications associated with this proposal.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 There are no implications of children and young people or vulnerable adults arising from this report.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 There are no equalities or human rights implications arising from this report.

## **11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

11.1 There are no implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

12.1 There are no implications for partners associated with this report.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

13.1 The appointment of a second suitably skilled and experienced independent member will strengthen the review of risk management by the Audit Committee and consequently improve the Council's governance arrangements.

### **Accountable Officer(s)**

Emma Hill, Head of Democratic Services  
Louise Ivens, Head of Internal Audit

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).