



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	FULL COUNCIL – 18 MARCH 2026
Subject	APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Helene Mansilla – Chair, Audit & Governance Committee Email: Helene.mansilla@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Angela Claridge – Director of Governance & Development (Monitoring Officer) Email: angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Angela Claridge – Director of Governance & Development (Monitoring Officer) Email: angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To appoint one/extend the other appropriately skilled and experienced members of the public to be “independent members” of the Audit & Governance Committee.
Annexes	None
Recommendation(s)	That Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Appoint Nick Craxton to the Council’s Audit & Governance Committee commencing immediately, until 31 March 20282. Extend Christopher Bass’ appointment to the Council’s Audit & Governance Committee until 31 March 2028.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparing for the future• Delivering Good Services• Responding to the Climate Emergency• Delivering Housing• Supporting Communities• Supporting the Economy



COTSWOLD

District Council

Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Head of Legal Services, Head of Democratic & Electoral Services, Deputy Chief Executive/S151 Officer and Chief Accountant.



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Full Council at its meeting on 18 January 2023 approved the action plan in response to recommendations arising from the Corporate Peer Review undertaken in October 2022

1.2 The Peer Review made recommendations that the Council needs to “reassure itself that its governance arrangements are robust including “Introduce two independent members to the Audit Committee in accordance with ‘CIPFA’s Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police 2022’ good practice guidance”.

1.3 Suitably qualified and experienced independent member(s) serving on Audit and Governance Committees can bring specialist knowledge and insight to the workings and deliberations of the committee which, when partnered with elected members' knowledge of working practices and procedures, ensure:

- An effective independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework.
- Independent review of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance.
- Independent challenge to and assurance over the Authority's internal control framework and wider governance processes.
- Oversight of the financial reporting process.

1.4 The Chartered Institute of Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) recommend in their publication, “Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities & Police” (2022) the following:

- “Including co-opted independent members (also known as lay members). A co-opted independent or lay member is a committee member who is not an elected representative but recruited to join the committee. The objective of including such members is to increase the knowledge and experience base of the committee, reinforcing its independence. Inclusion of lay members is a legislative requirement for authorities in Wales and for combined authorities in England.”

Where there is no requirement to (the position for Cotswold District Council), CIPFA recommends the committee includes two co-opted independent members.

1.5 The reasons for CIPFA’s recommendation are:

- 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.

Two co-opted members shows a commitment to supporting and investing in the committee.

While including co-opted members can bring real value to the committee, care is needed to ensure that the arrangement works well, both for the co-opted member and for the other committee members. It is essential that the co-opted member receives an adequate induction and ongoing support to provide organisational context and to build working relationships.

- 1.6** At its meeting on 20 September 2023, the Council approved the appointment of two Independent (non-elected) Members to the Audit & Governance Committee, Christopher Bass and John Chesshire, for a four-year term.
- 1.7** Following the recent resignation of John Chesshire, this report recommends the appointment of a new Independent Member, Nick Craxton. It also proposes extending the term of Christopher Bass until the abolition of this authority.

2. RECRUITMENT

- 2.1** The vacancy was advertised across social media channels. Following a robust selection and interview process, Nick Craxton, demonstrated that he meets all the requirements of the person specification for the role, and will bring appropriate expertise to the committee. Therefore, Nick is recommended for appointment.
- 2.2** Nick Craxton works in the telecommunications industry and has a background in reward and more recently risk management and governance. Nick sits on his organisation's Ethics Forum. Nick is currently the chair of CDC's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) which he'll be resigning from to take up this role. The implications of which are that the IRP remains quorate with three remaining members but will need to select a new chair and may wish to recruit to the IRP for greater resilience.



2.3 Christopher Bass is a qualified management accountant, lives in Cirencester, and is the Operations Director for a West Oxon based company who manufacture healthcare and medical equipment.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Costs associated with the allowance of £1,000 per annum to each independent member and training can be found from within existing revenue service budgets.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Council's Audit and Governance Committee is defined by the Local Government Act 2000 and its purpose is to give assurance to elected members and the public about the governance, financial reporting and performance of the Council. The appointment of independent members on the committee will assist and promote good governance and scrutiny of the committee.

5. EQUALITIES IMPACT

5.1 There are no implications in terms of equality legislation.

6. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no climate or ecological emergency implications.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

(END)