



**COTSWOLD**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	<b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>FULL COUNCIL – 20 SEPTEMBER 2023</b>
Subject	<b>APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO THE AUDIT &amp; GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member(s)	Cllr Nigel Robbins – Chair, Audit & Governance Committee Email: <a href="mailto:nigel.robbins@cotswold.gov.uk">nigel.robbins@cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer(s)	Angela Claridge, Director of Governance & Development Tel: 01282 623219 Email: <a href="mailto:angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk">angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	To appoint two appropriately skilled and experienced members of the public to be “independent members” of the Audit & Governance Committee.
Annexes	None
Recommendation/s	The Council resolves to:  <i>1. Appoint John Cheshire and Christopher Bass to the Council's Audit &amp; Governance Committee for a four year term, commencing immediately.</i>
Corporate priorities	Ensure that all services delivered by the Council are delivered to the highest standard
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Head of Legal Services Business Manager – Democratic Services Deputy Chief Executive/S151 Officer.

## I. BACKGROUND

I.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.

I.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”.

I.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.

I.4 The Chartered Institute of Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) recommend in their publication, “Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities & Police” (2022) the following:

I.5 *“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.

I.6 The reasons for CIPFA’s 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.*

*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”.*

1.7 Council, at its meeting on 15 March 2023, agreed to commence the recruitment of up to two Independent (non-elected) Members of Audit Committee, an associated recruitment campaign pack, and an annual payment of £1,000

## **2. RECRUITMENT**

2.1 The role was advertised across social media channels with a positive response resulting in fifteen applications. Following a robust selection and interview process, two candidates – John Chesshire & Christopher Bass, demonstrated that they met all of the requirements of the person specification for the role, and will bring appropriate expertise to the committee. Therefore John Chesshire & Christopher Bass are recommended for appointment.

2.2 John Chesshire is a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors (CIIA), lives in Oxford, and is the Independent Audit Committee Chair for the London Borough of Hillingdon. In 2019, John was awarded the CIIA Distinguished Conduct Award for a lifetime’s contribution to the internal auditing profession.

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. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

(END)