**CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCIL**

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Appointment of Co-opted Independent Member

Application Pack

**AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED INDEPENDENT MEMBER**

**Background**

Cheshire West and Chester Council was established in April 2009 as part of the structural changes to local government in England. It brought together the boroughs of Chester, Ellesmere Port and Neston, and Vale Royal, with part of Cheshire County Council, forming the fourth largest unitary in the North West with around 340,000 residents.

The Council is responsible for, amongst other things, maintaining the roads, providing transport services, commissioning school places and specialist support services for vulnerable children and their families, educating children, providing social care to elderly and vulnerable people and looking after waste and recycling.

Cheshire West and Chester brings a fresh and energetic approach to providing top quality services for its many customers and communities. West Cheshire is a place where everyone can Thrive – through our core values of Teamwork, Honesty, Respect, Innovation, Value for Money and Empowerment.

**Audit and Governance Committee**

The Audit and Governance Committee is currently composed of 11 elected members on a political balance basis. The Committee meets approximately six times a year, with meetings held in person in the Ellesmere Port Library Committee Room, commencing at 6pm. The successful applicant will need to be available to attend these meetings and any associated training and development events.

The Committee is a key element of the Council’s arrangements to support good governance. It provides challenge and focus on the Council’s governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting processes. It also promotes and maintains high standards of ethical behaviour by members and co-opted members of the Council, assisting them to observe the Code of Conduct for Members and monitoring its operation.

The Committee, like all the Council’s committees, is politically balanced but its success depends on its ability to remain apolitical in its meetings and discussions.

The co-option of an independent member to the Committee will help to bring additional knowledge and expertise and will also reinforce its political neutrality and independence. Co-opted members to Council committees are not members of the Council itself, therefore other than in limited circumstances they have no voting rights. Co-opted members would instead be consulted during committee meetings and their views taken into account by voting members of the committee.

**Job Purpose**

As part of the Audit and Governance Committee you will:

* Review the Council’s corporate governance arrangements, including its ethical framework, against recognised best practice and consider annual governance reports and assurances.
* Consider and make recommendations to the Council regarding changes to the Constitution.
* Oversee the production of the Standards Annual Report and recommend it to Council.
* Monitor and comment on the effective development and operation of risk management policies in the Council
* Consider and comment on reports from the External Auditor, including the annual plan and Annual Audit Letter.
* Consider and comment on the Annual Internal Audit Plan.
* Consider and comment on reports from internal audit reviews undertaken in accordance with the Annual Audit Plan.
* Consider any significant issues arising from external or internal audit work.
* Consider and comment on the Head of Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion including a summary of internal audit activity, together with the level of assurance it can give over the Council’s governance, risk management and control arrangements.
* Monitor and comment on arrangements to protect the Council from fraud and corruption, including the Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy and the Whistle Blowing Policy.
* Review and approve the Annual Statement of Accounts, including the Annual Governance Statement
* Review and approve the Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Report and progress reports.

**Key Responsibilities and Commitments**

The independent member will need to have appropriate skills, experiences and competencies to meet the key responsibilities and commitments below.

* Committing to attend and constructively participate in meetings.
* Thorough preparation for meetings through careful consideration of all agenda reports and documents.
* Questioning senior management on issues arising from committee papers with due regard to the role of the committee.
* Adopting and demonstrating a politically neutral perspective in questions asked and the general contribution to the work of the committee.
* Applying relevant skills and experiences to add value and depth to the work of the committee.
* Committing to personal development in the role.
* Committing to attend training sessions in accordance with agreed development
* Signing and abiding by the Members Code of Conduct.
* Adopting the highest levels of personal integrity, openness and honesty.

**Person Specification**

The attributes that we are looking for are listed below. Applicants for the role should complete the application form to express their interest and explain how they meet the desirable requirements.

* Good advocacy skills: able to present relevant and well-reasoned arguments and provide effective and constructive challenge.
* Ability to effectively analyse and interpret complex issues arising from written and verbal reports on finance, audit, risk management and governance matters.
* Good understanding of the importance of accountability and probity in public life.
* Ability to demonstrate objectivity, integrity and discretion.
* Good communication and interpersonal skills; a confident public speaker.
* Ability to maintain confidentiality of sensitive information.

Knowledge of the following is desirable:

* Previous experience of audit committees.
* Understanding of local government and the role of officers and members.
* The Council’s objectives, key activities and the key challenges it faces.
* Financial management / accountancy / risk management / governance within the public or private sector.
* Understanding of the roles and purpose of Internal and External Audit.

**Other**

You must:

* Have local connections, and either reside within the area of Cheshire West and Chester, carryout the main part of your work or have other recognisable ties to the area.
* Agree to abide by the provisions of the Members Code of Conduct while serving on the Committee.
* Disclose to the Council any matter that might damage its reputation or indicate a real or perceived conflict of interest with the role of the Committee.

You must not:

* Be a councillor or officer of the Council or have been so in the preceding five years prior to appointment.
* Be related to, or a close friend of, any councillor or officer of the Council.
* Have been convicted of any offence attracting a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for not less than a period of 3 months without the option of a fine. The Council has the right to DBS check any independent committee members.
* Be an undischarged bankrupt.
* Have significant business dealings with the Council.
* Have a formal connection with any political group.
* Be an employee of or the holder of a significant office in an organisation with close commercial links with the Council.

**Remuneration**

Co-opted independent members do not receive an allowance but are entitled to claim for travelling and subsistence expenses in undertaking their role in accordance with the Council’s member allowance scheme.

**Behaviour and Code of Conduct**

Whilst operating as a member of the Audit and Governance Committee, co-opted independent members are expected to follow the Nolan Principles of Standards in Public Life, which form the basis of the elected Members’ Code of Conduct.

A copy of the current code of conduct can be found here:

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/your-council/how-we-work/constitution/documents/g1a-member-code-of-conduct.pdf>

**Application and Selection Process**

Please submit your application form (next page) to Vanessa Whiting, Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer:

* **Email:** [cwacmonitoringofficer@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:cwacmonitoringofficer@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)
* **By post:** Vanessa Whiting, Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council, 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BE

The **closing date** for applications is **Sunday 9 January 2022**.

Selection of candidates will be strictly in accordance with the key responsibilities and person specification outlined in this pack and will be based on the information contained in your application only, as supported by references.

Your application will be acknowledged, and you will be advised as to whether you have been selected for interview or not in due course.

Short listing for this appointment will be based upon an assessment of how applicants meet the criteria in the ‘Person Specification’ as evidenced by the application. It is suggested therefore that you include information on how you meet the criteria. The Interview Panel will be made up of members of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Please note that your 2 referees will be contacted without further notice to you unless you indicate to the contrary.

**APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT AS AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER**

**OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1 PERSONAL DETAILS** | |
| TITLE: | |
| FULL NAME: | |
| HOME ADDRESS: | |
|  | |
| CONTACT TELEPHONE NO: | |
| EMAIL: | |
| **2 Have you ever been a Councillor, co-opted member or officer of Cheshire West and Chester Council or a Councillor, co-opted member or officer of a parish or town council which falls within Cheshire West?** | |
| YES/NO | |
| *If your answer to this question is yes, please give the date on which you ceased to be a*  *Member or employee.* | |
| **3 Are you related to, or a close friend of, a member or employee of Cheshire West and Chester Council?** | |
| YES/NO | |
| *If your answer to this question is yes, please give details below* | |
| **4 Are you, or have you been a member of a political party?** | |
| YES/NO | |
| *If the answer to this question is yes, please give details below* | |
| **5 Please indicate whether there is any matter concerning your own conduct which, if it were generally known, might affect public confidence in your ability to contribute to the work of the Audit and Governance Committee.** | |
| YES/NO | |
| *If your answer to this question is yes, please give details below.* | |
| **6 Please confirm that you are able to meet the attendance requirements of the role i.e. attending early evening meetings in person at the designated Council venue.** | |
| YES/NO | |
| **7 Please say why you wish to be considered for the post of Independent Member and what you could offer the Council. Give brief details of your experience (e.g. employment / business / professional /voluntary/ public service) and qualifications, and any other matter which you consider relevant to your suitability for appointment.**  **Please also explain how you meet the person specification outlined in this application pack.** | |
| **References: Please give the name, address, and telephone number of two referees who are not related to you and are not members of a town or parish council within Cheshire West and Chester and who are able to comment on your suitability for appointment. (Your referees will be contacted without further notice to you unless you indicate to the contrary).** | |
| Referee 1 | |
| Name: |  |
| Address |  |
| Contact Number: |  |
| Referee2 | |
| Name: |  |
| Address |  |
| Contact Number: |  |
| **Data Protection Act**  Information from this form will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. In signing it you agree to this data being held and processed and if appointed to the position you also agree to further personal information, including sensitive data (e.g. bank details) being held and processed by Cheshire West and Chester Council in accordance with the Act**.** | |
| **DECLARATION** | |
| I wish to be considered for appointment as an Independent Member of the Audit and Governance Committee and confirm that, if appointed, I will undertake to observe the code of conduct for councillors and co-opted members of Cheshire West and Chester Council, as adopted by the Council.  The information which I have given is true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief. | |
| NAME |  |
| DATE |  |

***Note: Please see overleaf for application return details***

**Please return the completed application form to:**

Vanessa Whiting, Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer:

* **Email:** [cwacmonitoringofficer@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:cwacmonitoringofficer@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)
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