

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	DSFRA/25/8
MEETING	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	17 FEBRUARY 2025
SUBJECT OF REPORT	APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
LEAD OFFICER	Clerk to the Authority (& Monitoring Officer)
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p><i>That the Authority:</i></p> <p>(a). <i>authorises the Clerk to undertake a process to identify a suitable candidate for appointment as co-opted independent members of the Audit & Governance Committee; and</i></p> <p>(b). <i>delegates final appointment of the co-opted independent members to the Appointments & Disciplinary Committee.</i></p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This paper identifies the need for consideration of the appointment of a new co-opted independent member of the Authority's Audit & Governance Committee following the resignation of one of the existing members effective from 21 January 2025.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	As indicated in the report.
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	Not applicable.
APPENDICES	Nil.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	CIPFA Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In July 2022, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) published a revised position statement (the Statement) on audit committees for local authorities and the police.
- 1.2. The scope of the position statement included the audit committees of fire and rescue authorities in England and Wales. The statement set out the purpose, model, core functions and membership of audit committees.
- 1.3. Terms of Reference of the Authority's Audit & Governance Committee are compliant with the core functions and specific responsibilities of an audit committee as set out in the Statement.
- 1.4. In terms of membership, however, the Statement comments:

“Where there is no legislative direction to include co-opted independent members, CIPFA recommends that each authority audit committee should include at least two co-opted independent members to provide the appropriate technical expertise.”
- 1.5. The Authority received a report on 26 September 2022 (Minute DSFRA/22/20 refers) setting out proposals for the appointment of independent members of the Audit & Governance Committee. The paper identified relevant considerations for the Authority in relation to this recommendation including those of the legal and financial issues such as role and remuneration. The Authority approved the recommendations and subsequently, two independent, co-opted members were appointed to the Audit & Governance Committee following a process held on 17 March 2023 via the Appointment & Disciplinary Committee (Minute ADC/23/4 refers). The two co-opted, independent members were appointed to serve for a maximum term of office of nine years, subject to confirmation at each annual meeting of the Authority (the first such confirmation to be at the Authority annual meeting in 2024).
- 1.6. The independent members appointed have contributed greatly to the work of the Audit and Governance Committee with constructive challenge of processes and procedures demonstrating value in these appointments. On 21 January 2025, however, one of the independent, co-opted Members tendered his resignation due to other, more pressing commitments.

2. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1. By virtue of Section 13(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, co-opted members may not exercise a vote. This may work to the advantage of the Authority in that attendance at meetings need not be physical. This in turn means that any associated recruitment process may be national, rather than restricted to the immediate locality.
- 2.2. From a resourcing perspective, funding is already included within the Authority's revenue budget under Members' Allowances for two co-opted independent members of the Audit & Governance Committee (based on 0.5 the basic allowance for an Authority Member, i.e., £1523 per annum currently).

- 2.3. The CIPFA Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police 2022 for the audit committees of all relevant authorities (including combined fire and rescue authorities) recommends the appointment of **at least** two co-opted independent members to provide appropriate technical expertise.
- 2.4. It is considered, therefore, that a process should be undertaken to seek a replacement co-opted, independent member of the Audit & Governance Committee.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The Authority is asked to consider this report with a view to:
- (a). authorising the Clerk to undertake a process to identify suitable candidates for appointment as a co-opted, independent member of the Audit & Governance Committee; and
 - (b). delegating final appointment of the co-opted independent member to the Appointments & Disciplinary Committee.

SAMANTHA SHARMAN
Clerk to the Authority (& Monitoring Officer)