St Albans City and District Council Recruitment Pack for the Appointment of an Independent Chair of the Audit Committee

**Background**

St Albans City and District Council is seeking to appoint an Independent Chair to its Audit Committee.

The Audit Committee is a key part of the Council’s corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

Terms of Reference for the Committee can be found at Appendix B and successful candidates will join the nine Councillors who sit on the Committee, and in line with the Council’s Constitution will not have voting rights. Committee meetings are held at the Civic offices in the evening. Approximately four meetings are held each year, typically lasting up to two hours. In addition, there will be a requirement to attend agenda briefings, occasional training sessions and prepare for meetings. Briefings and training usually take place via Microsoft Teams.

Applications should be made in writing, ideally supported by both a recent CV and covering letter. Email submissions can be made to the Panel via Suzanne Jones, Strategic Director – Customer, Business and Corporate Support (S151 Officer) by Tuesday 30th August 2022

The Council agreed a Panel comprising the following:

* Cllr Chris White – Leader of the Council
* Cllr Helen Campbell – Deputy Leader of the Council
* Cllr Brian Ellis – Leader of the Conservative Group
* Cllr David Mitchell – Independent
* Gareth Moss, Chief Finance Officer, Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

The Panel will be supported by the Statutory Officers, some of whom will attend the interview.

**Duties and responsibilities**

1. To attend and Chair meetings of the Audit Committee.
2. To participate fully in the discharge of the Audit Committee functions, as set out in the Committee’s terms of reference.
3. To actively promote good governance within St Albans City and District Council.
4. To participate in training and development events to promote awareness of the role and remit of the Audit Committee.

**Role requirements**

Appendix A sets out the person specification for the role.

**Eligibility/Special conditions**

To be eligible to apply for either role you:

* Must not be a councillor or officer at St Albans City and District Council or have been so in the preceding five years prior to appointment.
* Must not be closely associated with anyone who is now a Councillor or employee of St Albans City and District Council.
* Must have no unspent criminal convictions (Rehabilitation of Offenders Act applies).
* Must not be an undischarged bankrupt.
* Should have no significant business dealings with St Albans City and District Council, which could be seen to be prejudicial to a person’s independence or represent a conflict of interests.
* Should have no connection with any political group or be engaged in any party-political activity.

Applicants must also be prepared to publicity declare and register any interest they have on the same basis as members of St Albans City and District Council and observe the requirements of the Council’s Constitution in performance of their duties in their capacity as the independent chair.

**Remuneration**

Successful candidates will receive an annual allowance of £3,000 per year, subject to annual approval by Full Council.

Reasonable expenses can be claimed in line with Member’s subsistence, travelling and carer’s allowances as per part 6 (Members’ allowance scheme) of the Council’s constitution.

**Term of office**

The Term of Office for the Independent Chair of the Audit Committee is three years.

**Application process**

Applications should be made in writing to Suzanne Jones, Strategic Director – Customer, Business and Corporate Support, St Albans city and District Council, Civic Centre, St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3JE ideally supported by both a recent CV and covering letter. Email submissions can be made to suzanne.jones@stalbans.gov.uk

Your submission should make it clear whether each of the following **eligibility/special conditions** have been met. To be eligible to apply for either role you:

* Must not be a councillor or officer at St Albans City and District Council or have been so in the preceding five years prior to appointment.
* Must not be closely associated with anyone who is now a councillor or employee of St Albans City and District Council.
* Must have no unspent criminal convictions (Rehabilitation of Offenders Act applies).
* Must not be an undischarged bankrupt.
* Should have no significant business dealings with St Albans City and District Council, which could be seen to be prejudicial to a person’s independence or represent a conflict of interests.
* Should have no connection with any political group or be engaged in any party-political activity.

The closing date for applications is 5pm Tuesday 30th August 2022and it is expected that interviews will take place in early September

For general enquires about the position, or specific information about the Audit and Standards Committee, please contact Suzanne Jones on 01727 819200 or by email at suzanne.jones@stalbans.gov.uk

Members of ethnic minority communities and disabled people are currently under-represented on the Committee so applications from members of these groups are particularly welcome, although all applications will be considered on merit.

**APPENDIX 1**

**Person Specification**

| **Criteria** | **Essential/Desirable** |
| --- | --- |
| Be able to demonstrate independence from the Council | Essential |
| A good understanding of governance, risk management and control | Essential |
| Integrity, objectivity, discretion and the ability to make decisions in line with the Nolan principles | Essential |
| Ability to analyse complex information, question, probe and seek clarification so to come to an independent and unbiased view | Essential |
| Effective interpersonal skills, including good communication skills, the ability to cooperate with others in a committee and demonstrate tact and diplomacy in handling sensitive matters | Essential |
| For the Audit aspect of the role – knowledge/experience in finance, risk management, performance management or audit and/or general management of businesses or public sector organisations.  | Essential |
| A broad range of experience, preferably in a medium/large organisation in any sector at a senior level or other experience which would provide similar benefits  | Desirable |
| Understanding of the political environment that local authorities operate within | Desirable |

**APPENDIX 2**

**ST. ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**AUDIT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE (APPROVED – JULY 2022)**

**Statement of purpose**

1. The Audit Committee is a key component of St. Albans District Council’s corporate governance. It provides an independent and high level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.
2. The purpose of our Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated internal control environment. It provides independent review of the Council’s governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

**CORE FUNCTIONS**

**Governance, risk and control**

1. To review the Council’s corporate governance arrangements against CIPFA’s “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016” framework, including the ethical framework and consider the local code of governance.
2. To review the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk and governance environment and supporting assurances, taking into account Internal Audit’s opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s framework of governance, risk management and control.
3. To consider the Council’s arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.
4. To consider the Council’s framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the Council.
5. To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the Council.
6. To monitor progress in addressing risk related issues reported to the committee.
7. To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.
8. To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the Council from fraud, bribery and corruption.
9. To monitor the counter-fraud bribery and corruption strategy, actions and resources.
10. To review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations

**Internal Audit**

1. To approve the Internal Audit Charter.
2. To review proposals made in relation to the appointment of external providers of Internal Audit services and to make recommendations.
3. To approve the risk-based Internal Audit plan, including Internal Audit resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.
4. To approve significant interim changes to the risk based Internal Audit plan and resource requirements.
5. To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the Head of Internal Audit to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.
6. To consider any impairments to independence or objectivity arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing of the Internal Audit Manager. To approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments.
7. To consider reports from the Head of Internal Audit on Internal Audit’s performance during the year, including the performance of external providers of Internal Audit Services. These will include:
8. Updates on the work of Internal Audit including key findings, issues of concern and action in hand as a result of Internal Audit work.
9. Reports on the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme.
10. Reports on instances where the Internal Audit function does not conform to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note, considering whether the non-conformance should be included in the Annual Governance Statement.
11. To consider the Head of Internal Audit’s annual report, specifically:
12. The statement of the level of conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note and the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme that supports the statement – these will indicate the reliability of the conclusions of Internal Audit.
13. The opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s framework of governance, risk management and control together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion – these will assist the committee in reviewing the Annual Governance Statement.
14. To consider summaries of specific Internal Audit reports as requested.
15. To receive reports outlining the action taken where the Head of Internal Audit has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the Council or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions.
16. To contribute to the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme and in particular, to the external quality assessment of Internal Audit that takes place at least once every five years.
17. To consider a report on the effectiveness of Internal Audit to support the Annual Governance Statement, where required to do so by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
18. To provide free and unfettered access to the Audit Committee Chair for the Head of Internal Audit, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the committee.

**External audit**

1. To support the independence of external audit through consideration of the external auditor’s annual assessment of its independence and review of any issues raised by PSAA (Public Sector Audit Appointments) in full.
2. To consider the External Auditor’s annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance.
3. To consider specific reports as agreed with the External Auditor.
4. To comment on the scope and depth of External Audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.
5. To commission additional work from Internal and External Audit as required.
6. To advise and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between Internal and External Audit and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies.

**Financial reporting**

1. To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Council.
2. To consider the External Auditor’s report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

**Treasury management**

1. To be responsible for the scrutiny of the Council’s Treasury Management Strategy, including receiving regular reports on activities, issues and trends to support the Committee’s understanding of treasury management activities, risks and associated assurances.
2. To comment on the draft Treasury Management Strategy on an annual basis before presenting to Council for approval.

**Accountability Arrangements**

1. To report annually to Full Council on the Committee’s findings, conclusions and recommendations; providing its opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s governance, risk management and internal control frameworks; Internal and External Audit functions and financial reporting arrangements.
2. To report to Full Council on the Committee’s performance in relation to its Terms of Reference and the effectiveness of the Committee in meeting its purpose.
3. To publish an annual report on the work of the committee.

**Membership**

1. The Audit Committee will comprise:
2. Nine Members in accordance with the political proportionality rules, who may be represented by designated substitutes in their absence. None of the members should be Lead Councillors, Members of the Policy Committee, or the Chair or Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
3. No Lead Councillor or member of the Policy Committee will be eligible to serve either as a member of the Audit Committee or as a replacement member on that Committee.
4. The committee membership will also comprise a suitably experienced or knowledgeable independent member, appointed by Council. The independent member will also fulfil the role of Chair of the Committee. The independent member will be required to sign a Declaration of Interest and have regard to the Council’s Code of Conduct, have a tenure of 3 years, and will not participate in voting. In the event of a tied vote, the independent member serving as Chair will not have the right to a casting vote as set out in the Council Procedure Rules.
5. Council will also appoint a Vice Chair from the committee’s membership. In the absence of the independent Chair, the Vice Chair will act in the Chair for the duration of the meeting. In such circumstances, the Vice Chair in the Chair will retain their voting rights by virtue of being a Councillor.
6. Total membership of the Committee will not include more than two Members who also serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
7. Where a replacement Member substitutes for another at a meeting of the Audit Committee, the requirement for cross-membership not to exceed two Members from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be maintained.
8. Councillors serving as members of the Committee shall be appointed at the Annual Council meeting for a term of office of one year and shall be eligible for re-appointment for further terms of office. Casual vacancies shall be filled by Full Council for the remainder of the year.

**Meetings**

1. The Audit Committee will ordinarily meet at least four times a year. The Chair of the Audit Committee may convene additional meetings as s/he deems necessary in consultation with the Section 151 Officer or Head of Internal Audit. In particular there may be an additional meeting to discuss the drafts of the annual statutory accounts of the Council and the Annual Governance Statement.
2. The Chief Executive, the Section 151 Officer, or the Head of Internal Audit may ask the Audit Committee to convene further meetings to discuss particular issues on which they want the Committee’s advice.
3. The Audit Committee, Head of Internal Audit and External Audit have the opportunity for private discussions without the Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer or other senior managers being present if issues need exploring in this forum.

**Other Requirements**

1. All members of the Committee shall respect the confidentiality of Council information and proceedings where appropriate, particularly where exempt or confidential business is involved.
2. Members of the Committee should seek to attend all meetings of the Committee unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent this.
3. All members of the Committee and any substitute members should ensure that they participate fully in any training designed to assist them in their responsibilities as members of the Committee. Similarly, all members should act on appropriate advice and other information supplied by the Council to improve their effectiveness.

**Powers of the Audit Committee**

1. The Committee will have no delegated powers, but can require relevant officers to attend at any meeting or request other Councillors to attend where such attendance would be expedient to the work of the Committee.