



## **County Council Tuesday, 8 July 2025**

### **ADDENDA**

#### **12. Appointment of Independent Members of the Audit & Governance Committee (Pages 1 - 6)**

Report by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

At its meeting on 11 July 2023, Council approved the creation of the roles of two Independent Members of the Audit and Governance Committee. This report is to propose appointments to the two positions.

#### **13. Appointments to and Formation of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Pages 7 - 12)**

Report by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

This report is to provide details of the arrangements for the forthcoming review of members' allowances to be completed in the current Council Year 2025/26 and implemented from 1 April 2026.

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**Divisions affected – All**

**COUNCIL**

**8 JULY 2025**

## **APPOINTMENTS OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Council is RECOMMENDED to:-**

- a) confirm the appointment Kate Cartwright and Paul McGinn as Independent Members of the Audit and Governance Committee for a term of four years.
- b) record the Council's gratitude and appreciation for the contribution of Dr Geoff Jones as Independent Member of the Audit and Governance Committee and Chair of the Audit Working Group.

### **Independent Members of the Audit and Governance Committee**

- 2. At its meeting on 11 July 2023, Council approved the creation of the roles of two Independent Members of the Audit and Governance Committee. It was agreed that Dr Geoff Jones would continue as Independent Member until the new positions were filled and would then step down following a period of transition to the two new Independent Members. Council is recommended to record its thanks to Dr Geoff Jones for his contribution to the work of the Audit and Governance Committee during the past 13 years.
- 3. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy (CIPFA) guidance recommends that local authority audit committees should include at least two co-opted independent members. Interviews for both positions were held on 30 June 2025. The interviews were conducted by the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, Councillor Roz Smith, the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer and the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer. Following completion of the recruitment process Kate Cartwright and Paul McGinn were selected to be appointed.
- 4. Independent Members are an important part of the corporate governance assurance framework. They should bring knowledge and skills relating to

accounting, budget management, risk and control that are complementary to the elected members on the committee.

5. Independent Members do not have a vote in the same way as elected members on the committee. They are at meetings in an advisory and consultative capacity and are fully involved in the discussions on all the matters considered by the committee.
6. There are six formal meetings of the Audit and Governance Committee each year. The Independent Members will be expected to attend these meetings and participate at working group meetings and training sessions as appropriate. In order to undertake the role effectively they will need to make time to read meeting papers and undertake background reading as necessary.
7. An annual allowance of £3,156 is currently paid for each of the Independent Members to reflect the significance of the role. This amount was recommended by the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel in July 2023. This allowance will be included in the review of all allowances due to take place in this municipal year 2025-2026 following which a new Scheme of Allowances effective from 1 April 2026 will be recommended to Council for approval .
8. Independent Members cannot be drawn from people who have served as elected members or employees of Oxfordshire County Council within the last five years.

## **Corporate policies and priorities**

9. Independent Members of the Audit and Governance Committee are an important part of the corporate governance assurance framework.

## **Financial implications**

10. The 2025-26 Revenue Budget includes sufficient funds for the payment of allowances to the Independent Members of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Comments checked by Tom James, Head of Financial Services

## **Legal implications**

11. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by Kim Sawyer, Interim Head of Legal and Governance

## Employee implications

12. No direct implications affecting employees

## Equality and inclusion implications

**Local residents of all backgrounds**, including those from minority and protected characteristic groups, are **actively encouraged to apply for co-opted positions** at the Council. The Council is **committed to removing any barriers** related to personal background or experience and will provide **reasonable adjustments** as needed to ensure **fair, inclusive access** to these roles, reflecting the **diversity of the communities we serve**. This approach aligns with the Council's public sector equality duties to *advance equality of opportunity* between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not, ensuring no group is disadvantaged in participating in local governance.

**Anita Bradley**

**Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

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July 2025

Annex – Role description for Independent Member of audit and Governance Committee



## **Independent Member of the Audit & Governance Committee**

### **Role description**

#### **Job Description**

As an Independent Member of the Audit and Governance Committee, you will provide independent assurance on the effectiveness of the control environment and corporate governance arrangements within the Council. Your role will involve reviewing financial statements, monitoring audit activities, and promoting high standards of conduct among councillors and co-opted members.

#### **Key Responsibilities**

- Review the annual statement of accounts and annual governance statement.
- Consider reports from internal and external auditors.
- Monitor the independence, objectivity, and performance of auditors.
- Oversee counter fraud plans and activities.
- Review the council's treasury management strategy and activities.
- Promote high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members.
- Participate in committee meetings and training sessions.

#### **Qualifications**

- Practical experience in financial or general management within a business or public sector environment.
- Understanding of internal and external audit roles and the importance of good risk management.
- Ability to analyse, interpret, and absorb information effectively and quickly.
- Good communication and interpersonal skills.
- Commitment to building a strong council with clearly articulated objectives and purpose.
- Understanding of statutory duties and legislative requirements relevant to local government.
- Previous experience of audit-related activities is desirable but not essential.

#### **Independence Criteria**

To ensure independence, candidates must not be:

- Councillors, co-opted members, or officers of Oxfordshire County Council.
- Relatives or close friends of such persons.
- Affiliated with any political party.

#### **Terms of Appointment:**

- Fixed term of four years.
- Annual allowance of £3,156 plus reasonable expenses.
- Appointment subject to approval by a majority of Council members.

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**Divisions affected – All**

**COUNCIL**

**8 JULY 2025**

## **APPOINTMENTS TO AND FORMATION OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

**Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Council is RECOMMENDED to:** -
  - a) confirm the appointment of Benjamin Anim-Antwi, Martyn Hocking, Stephen McKechnie and Dave Shelmerdine as Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel and
  - b) to form the Independent Remuneration Panel for a period of two years.

### **Independent Remuneration Panel**

2. This report provides details of the arrangements for the forthcoming review of members' allowances to be completed in the current Council Year 2025/26 and implemented from 1 April 2026.
3. The last full review of the allowances agreed by members was in November 2021. The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) had made recommendations to the Council in December 2020 but members agreed to defer consideration of any changes until the new Council had been elected in May 2021. The current Scheme of Allowances was implemented from 1 April 2022 and provided for indexation for the maximum period of time permitted under the Members' Allowances (Local Authorities) (England) Regulations 2003, until 31 March 2026.
4. A further review of allowances is now required with any recommended changes to be implemented in a new Scheme of Allowances effective from 1 April 2026.
5. In order to undertake a review, the Council needed to renew the Independent Remuneration Panel. Positions on the Independent Remuneration Panel to consider the review were advertised on the Council's website and LinkedIn during the period 21 April to 11 May 2025. Eight applications were received including two from members of the previous panel interested in continuing.

Interviews were held on 25 and 26 June 2025 and the interview panel comprised the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Resources, the Monitoring Officer and the Interim Head of Legal and Governance. Four were selected to be recommended to the Council for appointment to the panel.

## **Timetable for review**

6. The timetable for the work to be undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel will be as follows: -

July 2025 – Panel to review legislation, current political structure and agree a plan for the review.

Distribute questionnaire to members including invitation to be available for interview.

August and September 2025 – Panel to review questionnaire responses and research, and to set up programme of councillor interviews.

Conduct councillor interviews.

September and October 2025 – Panel to agree any recommended revisions to scheme.

4 November 2025 – Council to consider report and recommendations.

7. An initial task for the Independent Remuneration Panel will be to consider making a recommendation on the allowances payable in the event (as now), that there are two main Opposition Groups with an equal number of members.
8. In addition, the Council is receiving a Parental Leave Policy at its meeting on 8 July 2025 and, as a consequence, the IRP will be asked to confirm their agreement to the continued payment of allowances to councillors whilst they are on Parental Leave as set out in the Parental Leave Policy.

## **Corporate policies and priorities**

9. Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel are an important part of the Council's corporate governance assurance framework.

## **Financial implications**

10. There is existing provision for payment of allowances of £500 per annum to members of the Independent Remuneration Panel in the Council's 2025-26 revenue budget. Provision will need to be made in the 2026-27 Revenue Budget estimates for any changes to the scheme of members' allowances approved by the Council.

Comments checked by: Tom James, Head of Financial Services.

### Legal implications

11. The Council is required to adopt a Scheme of Allowances ahead of 1 April 2026 to apply from that date. Under the Members' Allowances (Local Authorities) (England) Regulations 2003, the Council must have regard to the recommendations of its Independent Remuneration Panel when making or revising a scheme of allowances. Any decision not to follow the Panel's recommendations must be published. Consequently, Full Council should consider the Panel's recommendations, but it is for Council itself to agree its own scheme.
12. Therefore, Council can: (a) Follow the Panel's recommendations in whole or in part (b) Agree a revised scheme of allowances, either in whole or in part, including a 'status quo' arrangement

Comments checked by: Kim Sawyer, Interim Head of Legal and Governance

### Employee implications

13. There are no direct implications affecting employees arising from this report.

### Equality and inclusion implications

14. **Local residents of all backgrounds**, including those from minority and protected characteristic groups, are **actively encouraged to apply for co-opted positions** at the Council. The Council is **committed to removing any barriers** related to personal background or experience and will provide **reasonable adjustments** as needed to ensure **fair, inclusive access** to these roles, reflecting the **diversity of the communities we serve**. This approach aligns with the Council's public sector equality duties to *advance equality of opportunity* between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not, ensuring no group is disadvantaged in participating in local governance.

**Anita Bradley**

**Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

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July 2025

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## **Independent Remuneration Panel Role description**

### **About the Role**

As a member of the Independent Remuneration Panel, you will be responsible for evaluating and making recommendations on various allowances for councillors, including basic, special responsibility, travel, subsistence, and co-optees' allowances. Your role will involve conducting research, interviewing councillors, and analyzing comparative data from other councils to ensure well-founded recommendations.

### **Key Responsibilities**

- Assess and recommend the amount of basic allowance for elected members.
- Evaluate and suggest special responsibility allowances.
- Advise on travel and subsistence allowances.
- Recommend co-optees' allowances.
- Consider allowances for the care of children and dependants.
- Provide recommendations on backdating allowances and annual adjustments.
- Advise on pension entitlements for councillors.

### **Qualifications**

- No specific qualifications required, but a general interest in local issues and public service is essential.
- Ability to act impartially and objectively.
- Understanding of local government and public service.
- Good standing in the community.
- Ability to make balanced and reasoned conclusions based on evidence.

### **Independence Criteria**

To ensure independence, panel members must not be:

- Councillors, co-opted members, or officers of Oxfordshire County Council.
- Relatives or close friends of such persons.
- Members of any political party or have a public profile in political activities.

### **Terms of Appointment:**

- Fixed term of two years, renewable once.
- Unsalaries role with a small payment of £500 per annum plus reasonable expenses.
- Appointment subject to approval by a majority of Council members.
- You will be required to collaborate on an annual report each year, plus a larger report every four years. We anticipate this looking like three of four meetings across a two month period ever year.

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