

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	FULL COUNCIL – 3 DECEMBER 2025
Subject	APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Carl Rylett – Chair, Audit & Governance Committee Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Andrea McCaskie, Director of Governance, Monitoring Officer Tel: 01993 861294; Email: andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Tel: 01993 861634; Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To appoint one appropriately skilled and experienced member of the public to be an “independent member” of the Audit & Governance Committee.
Annexes	None
Recommendation	The Council resolves to: I. Appoint Victoria Field to the Council’s Audit & Governance Committee as an Independent Member for the remainder of the 4-year term ending on 25 September 2028.
Corporate priorities	Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Director of Finance

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Council is recommend to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced Independent Member to the Audit and Governance Committee following the resignation of Gemma Collings, who was appointed on 25 September 2024 for a 4 year term.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Independent Members 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 Council's financial and non-financial performance.
 - Independent challenge to and assurance over the Council's internal control framework and wider governance processes.
 - Oversight of the financial reporting process.
- 2.2 Following a review of the Audit and Governance Committee, Full Council, at its meeting on 22 May 2024, approved a recommendation from the Audit and Governance Committee to commence the recruitment of up to two Independent (non-elected) Members of the Audit and Governance Committee.
- 2.3 On 24 September 2024 Council appointed two members of the public, Richard Deuttenburg and Gemma Collings, to fulfil this role on the Committee for a 4-year term.
- 2.4 Gemma Collings later resigned from the role on 25 June 2025 due to a change in her personal circumstances.

3. RECRUITMENT

- 3.1 The vacant Independent Member role was advertised on the normal platforms and social media channels with a positive response resulting in twelve applications, three of whom were shortlisted for interview. The interview panel comprised the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services and the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services.
- 3.2 Victoria Field demonstrated that she meets the requirements of the person specification for the role and will bring appropriate expertise to the Committee. Therefore, Victoria Field is recommended for appointment.
- 3.3 Victoria Field is a retired local government officer with 30 years' experience in senior roles including responsibility for HR Shared Services at Oxfordshire County Council. Victoria is also a former parish councillor who lives within the district.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Council could decide not to proceed with the recommended appointment but this option is not recommended given that Council has previously agreed to have two

Independent Members on the Audit and Governance Committee and the candidate meets all of the requirements for the role.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Members' Allowances Scheme provides that co-opted members of the Audit and Governance Committee may claim a co-optees' allowance of £75 for up to four hours and £150 for more than four hours but less than 24 hours, in respect of attendance at any meeting of the Committee, or at a conference or training event, where attendance is authorised by the Council.
- 5.2 Co-opted members of committees are also entitled to travel and subsistence allowances on the same basis as councillors.
- 5.3 Any such costs will be funded by the budget for members' allowances.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The responsibilities of the Audit and Governance Committee are set out in Part 3C of the Council's Constitution. The purpose of the Committee is to provide assurance to elected members and the public about the governance, financial reporting and performance of the Council.
- 6.2 The appointment of Independent Members on the Committee is not a legal requirement but is considered to be good practice and will assist and promote good governance.

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Audit and Governance Committee has a role in overseeing the Council's internal controls and risk management arrangements. The appointment of Independent Members is intended to strengthen the expertise and skills of the Committee.
- 7.2 If the Council chose not to appoint to the vacant Independent Member role on the Audit and Governance Committee there is a risk that the Committee would not operate in accordance with good practice.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 Equalities issues were taken into account as part of the recruitment and selection exercise. Council is advised to have due regard to equalities issues when making appointments.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There will be a requirement for the two Independent Members to travel to meetings of the Audit and Governance Committee. However, any emissions associated with this travel are likely to be more than offset by the recent reduction in the size of the Committee from 17 to 11 Councillors.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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