

## PFCC Decision Report

**Report reference number:** 076-23

**Classification:** Not protectively marked

**Title of report:** Recruitment of an Independent Chair of the PFCC's Audit Committees

**Area of county / stakeholders affected:**

Joint Audit Committee and Fire and Rescue Audit Committee (both countywide)

**Report by:** Pippa Brent-Isherwood (Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer)

**Chief Officer:** Pippa Brent-Isherwood (Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer)

**Date of report:** 10 May 2023

**Enquiries to:** Pippa Brent-Isherwood (Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer)

### 1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed approach to the recruitment of a new Independent Chair of the Joint Audit Committee (JAC) and the Fire and Rescue Audit Committee (hereinafter referred to as "the Audit Committees"), and to seek the PFCC's approval to appoint RSM to support this work.

### 2. Recommendations

That the PFCC:

- Approves the proposed job description and person specification for the Independent Chair of the Audit Committees attached at Appendix 1.
- Alongside the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer, undertakes a competitive selection process for the role of Independent Chair of the Audit Committees.

- Engages RSM to assist in the recruitment of a new Independent Chair of the two Audit Committees, in line with the letter of engagement attached at Appendix 2, [REDACTED].
- Delegates authority to the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer to sign the letter of engagement attached at Appendix 2 via AdobeSign.

### **3. Background to the Proposal**

Following the resignation of the Independent Chair of the two Audit Committees, it is necessary to recruit a new Independent Chair.

It is best practice for a job description to be drawn up and agreed prior to commencing any recruitment process, and for the requirement or desire for any relevant knowledge or expertise to be clearly determined within this. Previously, the Independent Chair was appointed from within the independent membership and, as such, has not had a separate job description and person specification to work to. On this occasion, a conscious decision has been made by the PFCC, Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer to advertise specifically for an Independent Chair. As such, a job description and person specification has been developed and is attached for approval at Appendix 1. This has been developed based on the existing job description and person specification for all Independent Members of the Audit Committees, the Terms of Reference for the Audit Committees, CIPFA's publication *Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police* and the *CIPFA Guide to Auditor Panels*.

It is good practice for all public appointments to be publicly advertised, but especially important in this case as the Independent Chair of the Audit Committees will also be the Independent Chair of the Auditor Panel, and the vacancy must therefore be advertised in accordance with the Auditor Panel Regulations. RSM has assisted very ably with two previous open and competitive rounds of recruitment for Independent Members of the Committees and has confirmed that it is able to provide this service again.

### **4. Proposal and Associated Benefits**

The development and agreement of a job description and person specification specifically for the Independent Chair will help to ensure that the individual selected has the skills and knowledge required for the role, as will the use of a suitably robust recruitment process that tests and evidences this.

As set out above, RSM has been engaged on two previous occasions to support the recruitment of Independent Members to the PFCC's Audit Committees and has therefore built significant relevant experience that will enable it to support the recruitment of a new Independent Chair. If agreed, the approach to recruitment would include:

- Creating an appropriate advert and identifying suitable channels to attract candidates
- Acting as the point of contact for candidates, receiving all applications, confirming their receipt, and corresponding regarding any queries raised
- Developing and utilising a scoring matrix based on the job description and person specification to sift applications, with independent moderation

- Providing updates to candidates and the PFCC's Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer (on behalf of the PFCC, Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer) throughout the search process
- Creating a shortlist of suitable candidates for approval by the PFCC, Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer
- Co-ordinating a selection day(s) for the panel to interview shortlisted candidates
- Proposing a set of interview questions and a scoring matrix and collating interview packs for panel members
- Providing an independent observer for the interviews and co-ordinating a debrief session
- Notifying applicants as to whether they have been successful at each stage of the process or not
- Providing feedback to candidates who are shortlisted
- Supporting an induction event for the successful candidate

## **5. Options Analysis**

The PFCC and Chief Constable could recruit a new Independent Chair from amongst the existing Independent Members of the Committees. This option has been considered by the PFCC, Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer and discounted on the grounds that the role of Independent Chair requires certain skills and aptitudes that should be recruited for specifically. However, existing Independent Members of the two Audit Committees will be very welcome to apply for the position if they wish to.

The recruitment process could be undertaken in-house however this would require considerable investment of officer time which would be difficult to accommodate alongside other current priorities.

Alternatively, a wider competitive tender could be carried out to select an alternative provider. However, again this would take a considerable amount of time and may either result in the same outcome (i.e. RSM being commissioned to carry out the work) or an alternative supplier, with less direct experience of supporting the local committees and the recruitment of their Independent Members, being selected.

## **6. Consultation and Engagement**

The Job Description and Person Specification attached at Appendix 1 has been consulted on with the PFCC, the Chief Constable and the Chief Fire Officer, and their comments and amendments incorporated.

Equally, the proposal submitted by RSM was discussed in advance with these stakeholders, who have confirmed that they are content to proceed on this basis.

## **7. Strategic Links**

Having a sufficiently skilled and experienced Independent Chair of the Audit Committees will help to deliver the strategic priorities of the PFCC, as set out in both the Police and Crime Plan and the Fire and Rescue Plan.

## **8. Operational implications**

It is intended that the selection panel for the Independent Chair of the Audit Committees will comprise the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, the Chief Constable and the Chief Fire Officer.

## **9. Financial implications**

The [REDACTED] includes a discretionary discount that reflects RSM's long-standing relationships with the PFCC, Essex Police and the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. 50% will be payable on project commencement with the remaining 50% payable on completion.

The fee is exclusive of any additional advertising costs or job board charges, disbursements, travel expenses or VAT. Any associated mileage expenses will be charged at a rate of [REDACTED] per mile.

Whilst there is no specific budget set aside for this expenditure, the resultant overspend will either be offset by underspends in the PFCC's budget throughout the financial year or will be covered by the PFCC carry forward underspend held in the general reserve.

## **10. Legal implications**

Legislation does not specify whether the Independent Chair of the Audit Committees should be recruited into the role or appointed from the existing Independent Members of the Committees. It is therefore a local decision for the PFCC / PFCCFRA and the Chief Constable, as the appointing authorities, as to whether to recruit for an Independent Chair separately to the other Independent Members or not.

Under section 2(2) of the Local Audit (Auditor Panel) Regulations 2014, a person may only be appointed as an Independent Member of an auditor panel if the vacancy has been advertised in such a manner as the relevant authority considers likely to bring the vacancy to the attention of the public, and the person has submitted an application to fill that vacancy to the relevant authority. The proposals set out within this report will ensure compliance with these requirements.

Recruitment into the role will also be based upon the principles set out in the Code of Practice published by the Commissioner for Public Appointments which relate to ministerial appointments to public bodies. The basic principles are that appointments will be made on merit by an objective, fair and open selection process.

## **11. Staffing implications**

There are no staffing implications for the PFCC to note, other than the time required for the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer to devote to being the point of contact for RSM.

As set out in section 5 above, existing Independent Members of the two Audit Committees will be very welcome to apply for the position if they wish to.







**If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:**


All references to the fee to be redacted due to its commercial sensitivity.

Appendix 2 is not to be published as it has been marked Strictly Private & Confidential due to its commercial sensitivity.

**Date redaction carried out:** 12th May 2023

**Chief Finance Officer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only**

If redaction is required, the Treasurer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

**Sign:**  .....

**Print:** Janet Perry.....

**~~Chief Executive~~ / Chief Finance Officer**

**Decision and Final Sign Off**

I agree the recommendations to this report:

**Sign:** 

**Print:** ROGER HIRST

**PFCC**

**Date signed:** 12<sup>th</sup> May 2023

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

.....  
.....  
.....

**Sign:**

**Print:**

**PFCC/Deputy PFCC**