

AUDIT COMMITTEE: 17 November 2020

**IAN ARUNDALE - LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

AGENDA ITEM: 4.1

Reason for this Report

1. For the Audit Committee to consider a request from Ian Arundale, an Independent Lay Member of the Audit Committee, to extend his current leave of absence until the end of the municipal year 2020/21.
2. The report provides the Audit Committee with an opportunity to note the request and to consider recommending its approval to Council.

Background

3. In accordance with section 82 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the Audit Committee is required to have at least one lay member, and at least two thirds of the Audit Committee are to be members of the authority.
4. The Audit Committee is comprised of eight Councillors (5 Labour, 2 Conservative and 1 Liberal Democrat) and four Independent Lay Members. At the time of reporting, there is one Labour Councillor vacancy, and one unoccupied Independent Lay Member position (in lieu of the current leave of absence) on the Committee.
5. Ian Arundale has served as a Member of the Audit Committee from 25 June 2014 and as Chairperson between 22 June 2015 – 28 November 2019. Council approved his reappointment to the Audit Committee for a second term for the period 25 June 2019 to 24 June 2024.
6. Council approved Ian Arundale's ongoing leave of absence of 'up to a year' on 28 November 2019, to enable him to take up the position of Deputy Chief Constable through a short-term contract with Cleveland Police. The request followed consideration by Audit Committee on 12 November 2019, and was recommended for approval.

Issues

7. Over recent weeks, Ian Arundale has discussed concerns with the Audit Committee Chairperson and the Audit Manager relating to his capacity to return to attend Audit Committee meetings from 26 January 2021, being the first Committee meeting to follow the end of the one-year leave of absence approval by Council.
8. On 1 November 2020, Ian Arundale submitted a formal written request to the Audit Manager for his current leave of absence to be extended to cover the remainder of the municipal year 2020/21. The request is included in paragraphs 9 to 11.

Leave of Absence Request

9. Following our recent conversation, I am writing to update you, and outline my current position, in relation to the leave of absence that I been granted as a member of the Audit Committee.
10. As you are aware, the current expectation was for me to recommence attendance at Audit Committee meetings from 26th January 2021. My contract with Cleveland Police is still extant and the work programme I have contacted to complete continues due to complications arising from the Covid pandemic and the additional challenges that have arisen. It is therefore no longer realistic that I can make the projected return date for these reasons.
11. I therefore request that consideration be given to extending my return date until the end of this municipal year by which time I anticipate being able to return as a committee member.

Request Process

12. Council determines the size and membership of the Audit Committee, and has the authority to approve a leave of absence request.
13. Prior to the Council decision, the Audit Committee has an opportunity to consider the request, and to determine if it will recommend the approval to Full Council on 26 November 2020.

Legal Implications

14. There are no legal implications other than those set out in paragraph 3 of this report.

Financial Implications

15. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, for any period where there are fewer serving Co-opted Audit Committee Members there would be a reduction in the need for payments associated with the preparation and attendance of Committee Meetings, in accordance with the rates applicable through the Members' Schedule of Remuneration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. That the Audit Committee:
 - Notes the request for an extension of the leave of absence of Ian Arundale to the end of the municipal year 2020/21;
 - Considers recommending approval of the request to Full Council.

Gary Jones
Head of Democratic Services