

## GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### SUMMARY

1. Members met on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014 to discuss, amongst other things, the purpose and function of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny (GAS) Committee. The CFO made a brief presentation to remind Members of the history and purpose of the GAS Committee and to present options for consideration.
2. Following a lengthy debate Members working with officers developed a proposal for the future of the GAS Committee.
3. There was general consensus that the GAS Committee performed an essential role and that it should continue to be composed entirely of Independent Co-opted Members.
4. The following report acknowledges that the Governance and Audit roles of the Committee should remain largely unchanged. There is however potential to improve the scrutiny role by eliminating duplication and providing the opportunity to scrutinise some matters in depth and assessing the impact of decisions previously made by the HFA.
5. Consideration was also given to the membership and tenure of the GAS Committee.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

6. That Members:
  - (a) approve the amendments to the role of the Governance Audit and Scrutiny Committee outlined in this report;
  - (b) approve the proposed size and tenure of the Governance Audit and Scrutiny Committee;
  - (c) approve the recruitment of three members of the Governance Audit and Scrutiny Committee in 2014;
  - (d) appoint Mr David Hughes and Mr John Jepson as members of the Governance Audit and Scrutiny Committee until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014;
  - (e) appoint Mrs Gill Hardy as a member of the Governance Audit and Scrutiny Committee until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

### BACKGROUND

7. The GAS Committee has a key role to play in ensuring good governance within the organisation. It achieves this by reviewing and revising the Member Code of Conduct on a regular basis and by ensuring that Members are properly trained. Committee Members also monitor declarations of interest and have a role to play in

the event of a complaint against Members of the HFA. This role should remain unchanged.

8. Every Authority is required to have an Audit Committee function and in Humberside this is carried out by the GAS Committee. The Committee is required to provide independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance processes. To discharge this duty the committee receive reports on internal control and risk management, internal audit, external audit, performance, risk and programme management. It is proposed that these reports form the standing part of the GAS Committee agenda.
9. Members felt that the scrutiny role of the GAS Committee was one where improvements could be made and value added. At the present time the GAS Committee receives all reports destined for the HFA and scrutinises them before the HFA meeting. This creates a degree of duplication and does not offer the facility to scrutinise and assess the impact of decisions made by the Authority. Neither does it allow the GAS Committee to scrutinise in depth issues that concern themselves, officers or the Authority.
10. It is therefore proposed that the routine scrutiny of all reports submitted to the HFA will cease. Instead the HFA, GAS Committee and CMT will propose subjects for in-depth scrutiny. This scrutiny can be forward looking in that the Committee could scrutinise future proposals put before them by officers. Equally HFA Members may ask the Committee to scrutinise a particular issue or Committee Members themselves may wish to focus on a particular subject. Alternatively the Committee may be asked to assess the impact of decisions made by the HFA in retrospect. To achieve this they would have the option of inviting key HFA Members to address the Committee regarding decisions they have been party to. In practical terms an annual scrutiny programme could be developed by the GAS Committee and approved by the HFA. This would provide a more varied and challenging workload for the GAS Committee. None of the above changes require amendments to the Authority Constitution.
11. In terms of size eight appears to be an optimum number of GAS Committee Members and their period of tenure, originally set at three years seems reasonable and should remain unchanged. GAS Committee Members should be able to serve for a maximum of two terms (six years).
12. With this in mind two members of the GAS Committee have already served for more than six years and a third has served for five years. Members may consider recruiting new Committee Members in 2014 and as there is already a vacancy on the Committee three immediate vacancies would be created and a recruitment process would be needed to appoint new members. The timing is important as it would not be desirable for the whole committee to stand down at the same time. The remaining four members have a further 18 months to serve which would provide time for new appointees to gain experience.
13. It would be good practice to recruit new Members to the GAS Committee in 2014 though this would take some time. It would therefore be desirable to re appoint Mr David Hughes and Mr John Jepson as members of the GAS Committee until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014 to enable replacement members to be appointed. It would also be appropriate to re-appoint Mrs Gill Hardy as a member of the GAS Committee until April 30<sup>th</sup> 2015 as she has only served for five years.
14. In conclusion it must be said that the GAS Committee performs an essential and valuable role. The hard work and dedication of all Committee Members is greatly appreciated by Members of the HFA. These proposals should make the GAS Committee more effective and should provide more interesting and varied work for its

Members. This effectiveness will be further enhanced if Committee Members are provided with regular training to assist them in their role.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN COMPATIBILITY

15. The GAS Committee is an integral part of the Governance Framework which ensures we deliver our strategic objectives in the most effective and efficient way.

#### FINANCIAL/RESOURCES/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

16. None arising directly.

#### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

17. None arising directly though good governance supports legal compliance.

#### EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT/HR IMPLICATIONS

18. None arising directly.

#### CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

19. The GAS Committee provides independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework.

#### HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

20. None arising directly.

#### COMMUNICATION ACTIONS ARISING

21. None arising directly.

#### BACKGROUND PAPERS AVAILABLE FOR ACCESS

22. None.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS RESTATED

23. That Members:
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  - (b) approve the proposed size and tenure of the Governance Audit and Scrutiny Committee;
  - (c) approve the recruitment of three members of the Governance Audit and Scrutiny Committee in 2014;
  - (d) appoint Mr David Hughes and Mr John Jepson as members of the Governance Audit and Scrutiny Committee until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014;
  - (e) appoint Mrs Gill Hardy as a member of the Governance Audit and Scrutiny Committee until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

**R HANNIGAN**

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6 March 2014