

# Council

17 July 2025



<b>Title</b>	<b>Appointment of an Independent Member of the Audit Committee</b>
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report Author</b>	Linda Heron, Group Head Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All Wards
<b>Exempt</b>	No
<b>Exemption Reason</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Corporate Priority</b>	All
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Council is asked to appoint:</b>  <b>Sati Seehra as second independent member of the Audit Committee.</b>
<b>Reason for Recommendation</b>	To address recommendations in Best Value Inspection report and Grant Thornton external audit report and to comply with best practice.

## 1. Summary of the report

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Best Value Inspection report and Grant Thornton external audit report recommended appointment of another independent member of the Audit Committee</li><li>• The Council had undertaken a recruitment exercise for this role.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To further assist the Audit Committee and to comply with best practice.</li></ul>
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To appoint the selected candidate as another</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Council to agree the appointment of the selected</li></ul>

independent member of the Audit Committee.	candidate as second independent member of the Audit Committee.
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- 1.1 This report recommends that another independent member of the Audit Committee is appointed.
- 1.2 Best Value Inspection report and Grant Thornton external audit report recommended that the Council should appoint another independent member of the Audit Committee. Position statement by the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in relation to Audit Committees in local authorities made the following recommendation: "Where there is no legislative direction to include co-opted independent members, CIPFA recommends that each authority audit committee should include at least two co-opted independent members to provide appropriate technical expertise."
- 1.3 As a result of the recruitment process, the Appointments Committee concluded that it supported recommending the preferred candidate. Council is now asked to consider the recommendation by the Appointments Committee.

## **2. Key issues**

- 2.1 The role was advertised in March 2025 but the recruitment exercise was not successful. The role was advertised again in May 2025. A copy of the person specification accompanies this report in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Four candidates applied for the role, and all were invited for an initial interview, which was conducted by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee and assisted by the Deputy Chief Executive. Three candidates were selected for the second interview which was conducted by the Appointments Committee and assisted by the Group Head Corporate Governance.
- 2.3 Through the interview process Sati Seehra demonstrated that he fully met all the requirements of the person specification and would bring appropriate expertise to the Audit Committee. The Appointments Committee were unanimous in their decision on the recommendation to the Council.

## **3. Options analysis and proposal**

- 3.1 It is recommended by the Appointments Committee that the Council appoint Sati Seehra as second independent member of the Audit Committee.
- 3.2 Sati Seehra is a CIMA qualified accountant and has extensive experience gained within the banking, financial and private sectors, the internal audit department in another local authority and as the internal audit manager for the central government.

## **4. Financial management comments**

- 4.1 The Members' Allowances Scheme operating from 1 April 2024 provides a Special Responsibility allowance for Independent Member on the Audit Committee in the sum of £750. As an additional allowance payment this represents a small amount of Budget growth, but the part year effect is not material and it can be built into the revised Budget for 2025-26.

- 4.2 The increase in the number of independent members on the Audit Committee will be brought to the attention of the Independent Remuneration Panel when the annual review takes place.

**5. Risk management comments**

- 5.1 The appointment of another suitably qualified and experienced independent member will make a positive contribution to the Audit Committee, improve the Council's governance and internal control arrangements.

**6. Procurement comments**

- 6.1 None arising directly from this report.

**7. Legal comments**

- 7.1 Legal implications contained in the body of this report.

**8. Other considerations**

- 8.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

**9. Equality and Diversity**

- 9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

**10. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications**

- 10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

**11. Timetable for implementation**

- 11.1 If the appointment is made, Sati Seehra would be a member of the Audit Committee with immediate effect and would be provided with induction training with a view to him attending Audit Committee meetings from September 2025.

**12. Contact**

- 12.1 Linda Heron, Group Head Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer  
[l.heron@spelthorne.gov.uk](mailto:l.heron@spelthorne.gov.uk)

**Background papers:**

None

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Person Specification

# **Appendix 1**

## **Person Specification**

### **Qualifications and Experience**

As an essential requirement for this role you will be able to demonstrate professional qualifications in finance, accounting or audit.

You will have experience of working in a medium / large organisation at a senior level or other experience which would give similar benefits.

You will be inquisitive and open minded and you will have a good understanding of the Audit Committee's core functions and the principles of financial governance.

### **Skills**

You will have:

- an ability to understand complex issues and the importance of accountability and probity in public life
- an ability to analyse and question written and verbal reports on audit and risk management activities
- an understanding of the need for independence of audit from daily management responsibilities
- an ability to demonstrate integrity and discretion
- effective interpersonal skills
- be able to maintain strictest confidentiality of sensitive information

### **Knowledge**

All members of the Audit Committee should have, or should acquire as soon as possible after appointment:

- An understanding of the priorities, objectives and key activities of the Council and current major initiative and significant issues for the Council
- An understanding of the Council's structures and responsibilities, including key relationships with partners, businesses and organisations
- An understanding of the organisation's culture
- An understanding of any relevant legislation or other rules governing the organisation
- An understanding of corporate governance arrangements in place across the Council
- An understanding of the governance environment generally
- An understanding of risk management
- Strong knowledge and experience of local authority statutory accounting and audit regulations
- Strong knowledge and experience of housing and commercial property management

## **Other**

You must:

- Have local connections, and either reside in the Borough, carry out the main part of your work in the Borough or have other recognisable ties to the area.
- Agree to abide by the provisions of the Code of Conduct while serving on the Committee
- Be available for daytime meetings on occasion.

You must not:

- Be a councillor or officer of Spelthorne Borough Council or have been so in the preceding five years prior to appointment
- Be related to, or a close friend of, any councillor or officer of Spelthorne Borough Council.
- Have been convicted of any offence. Spelthorne Borough Council has the right to DBS check any independent committee members.
- Be an undischarged bankrupt
- Have significant business dealings with Spelthorne Borough Council
- Have a formal connection with any political group
- Have a proven history of vexatious and/or frivolous complaints against Spelthorne Borough Council
- Be the holder of a significant office in an organisation being grant aided/supported by Spelthorne Borough Council