

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE**
DATE: **WEDNESDAY, 26 MARCH 2014**
REPORT BY: **HEAD OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**
SUBJECT: **SIZE OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To consider increasing the number of seats for councillors on the Audit Committee.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The Audit Committee currently consists of seats for councillors allocated to the political groups as follows:-

Group	Seats	Group	Seats
Conservative	1	Labour	3
Independent	1	Liberal Democrat	0
Independent Alliance	1	New Independent	1

There is also one seat for a lay member in accordance with the Local Government Measure 2011 (the Measure).

2.02 At a recent meeting of the committee it was suggested that the size of the committee should be increased. The committee agreed that there should be more seats for councillors and that there should not be any additional lay members. It was also agreed to consult Group Leaders (and thus the wider membership of the Council) as to the optimum size for the committee.

2.03 As at the date of writing the report two groups had indicated their views. The New Independent Group was willing to increase the size of the committee and the Conservative Group was willing to see it increased by one place (but no more). The views of the remaining groups will be reported at the committee meeting.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 A number of members of the Audit Committee (including the Chair) believe that the committee should be increased by one or two places. This would:-

- Enable a broader political spread with a representative of all political groups; and
 - Reduce the impact of the occasional, inevitable absence by committee members. The Audit Committee has restricted substitutions (in order to ensure continuity) so any member absence has a greater impact.
- 3.02 The Audit Committee is politically balanced under the Local Government & Housing Act 1989. If membership were to be increased by one the Liberal Democrat Group would gain a seat. If membership were increased by two then the Labour Group would also gain an additional seat.
- 3.03 Clearly, whether to increase the number of places should be linked to whether that increase would improve the effectiveness of the committee. The annual self assessment of the effectiveness using CIPFA guidance does not reveal any perceived weakness in the working of the committee. However, that self assessment tool does not measure whether all political groups have places on the committee.
- 3.04 The Internal Audit Manager has researched the size of Audit Committees in other Welsh Councils. This reveals that 12 of the 22 committees have fewer than 10 places for councillors with four having six places, two having seven and four having eight places.
- 3.05 Since March 2013 there have been eight meetings. At three meetings there was one apology but a substitute was sent. At two meetings there were two apologies, although only one substitute. At one meeting there was one apology but no substitute.
- 3.06 Having examined the different aspects of the work of the committee there is no evidence that its size is preventing it from undertaking its duties effectively. On the contrary, the committee appears to be working very well with high levels of attendance, interest and diligence. The only criticism is that the committee does not contain a representative of every group, which, due to the political balance rules, is the case for some other committees as well.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That the committee notes the request from the Audit Committee to increase the number of places for councillors.
- 4.02 That in light of its current effective functioning, sufficiency of size and loyal member attendance, the Constitution Committee does not recommend any change in the size of the Audit Committee to the Annual General Meeting.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 None as a result of this report.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 None as a result of this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None as a result of this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None as a result of this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None as a result of this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 With political Group Leaders.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 With political Group Leaders.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None

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