

**Extract From Section 8 of the Council's Constitution – Other Committees**

**3. Audit and Standards Committee**

3.1 The purpose of an Audit and Standards Committee is:

- to provide independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment,
- to provide independent scrutiny of the authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment,
- to oversee the financial reporting process
- to promote and maintain high standards of conduct for elected and co-opted members of Staffordshire County Council
- to provide a system for dealing with complaints about the conduct of elected and co-opted members.

3.2 The Audit and Standards Committee has the following functions and responsibilities:-

- To approve authority's statement of accounts
- To approve, monitor, review and amend from time to time the Council's Code of Corporate Governance to ensure that it is adequate and effective.
- To advise on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's internal control environment.
- To liaise with the Audit Commission over the appointment of the council's external auditor.
- To review any issue referred to it by the chief executive or a director, or any council body.
- To monitor the adequacy and effectiveness of the External Audit service and respond to its findings. This will include:-
  - o Discussing the nature and scope of the audit of County Council services and functions, and considering the external audit fee and terms of engagement;
  - o Receiving and considering external audit reports and Management Letters and advising the County Council as appropriate;
  - o Monitoring the County Council's response to the external auditor's findings and the implementation of external audit recommendations.
- To work with and advise the Director of Finance and Resources in ensuring arrangements for the provision of an adequate and effective Internal Audit.
- To monitor the adequacy and effectiveness of the Internal Audit service and Chief Officers' responsibilities for ensuring an adequate control environment including:-

- o Receiving an annual internal audit plan from the Chief Internal Auditor
- o Monitoring progress against the plan through the receipt of periodic progress reports and an annual Internal Audit report;
- o Receiving and considering major Internal Audit findings and recommendations;
- o Monitoring the response to major findings and the implementation of key recommendations;
- To monitor the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's risk management processes and to:
  - o Approve the Risk Management Policy Statement and monitor its implementation
  - o Approve the content of the Corporate Risk Register and proposed Risk Mitigation Action Plan and monitor its implementation
- To monitor the adequacy and effectiveness of the County Council's Information Governance arrangements
- To monitor the adequacy and effectiveness of the County Council's Corporate Health and Safety policies and to approve the annual Action Plan and key priorities
- To oversee, review, and make any recommendations on, the effectiveness and operation of the Constitution and any of the provisions of it.
- To divide electoral divisions into polling districts at local Government elections.
- To declare vacancy in office in certain cases.
- To give public notice of casual vacancies for County Councillors
- To determine fees and conditions for supply of copies of, or extracts from, election documents.
- To provide staff etc. to person nominated by the Monitoring Officer
- To determine the voting rights of co-opted members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- To make payments or provide other benefits in cases of maladministration etc.
- To oversee the Register of Members' Interests
- To advise the County Council on the adoption and revision of the members Code of Conduct and Protocols and to monitor their operation
- To advise, train or arrange training for elected and co-opted members on matters related to the Code of Conduct and Protocols
- To assist County Councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct and Protocols
- To interview and make recommendations to Council on the appointment of Independent Person(s) in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

- To oversee the effectiveness of the Council's procedures for investigating and responding to complaints about Councillors and Co-opted members.
- To make final decisions on recommendations of the standards Panel on those cases where a breach of the Code of Conduct has been proven.
- To grant dispensations to elected and co-opted members from requirements relating to interests set out in the members Code of Conduct
- To determine the level of allowances and expenses for the Independent Person(s) appointed in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 to consider alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct
- To establish Panels of five members of the Committee as and when necessary with full delegated powers to deal with Appeals against:- (a) disciplinary or employment related action, including in respect of the List of Politically Restricted Posts, or grading from officers (b) dismissal from teachers employed in Education Support Units (c) Any executive decision where the law requires that a person shall have a right of appeal within the Council against that decision and for which no other provision is made under this Constitution
- To establish Panels of five members of the Committee who are not Members of the Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committee or Planning Committee to deal with Planning Applications referred to it under Paragraph 2.2 of this section
- To establish Panels of five members of the Committee, as and when necessary, to deal with those complaints of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct which the Director of Strategy, Governance and Change, as Monitoring officer, in consultation with an Independent Person(s) deems to warrant detailed consideration and to make final recommendations thereon.
- To the extent that it relates to a function which is not a function of the Executive, authorising a person to exercise a function to which Section 70 of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 applies, and revoking that authority.
- To deal with any other matter involving a regulatory, judicial, quasi-judicial or licensing function of the County Council which by law cannot be the responsibility of the Executive and for which no other provision is made in this Constitution.
- To oversee the maintenance of the List of Politically Restricted Posts within the County Council.