

Decision to Opt into the National Scheme for Auditor Appointments Managed by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) as the Appointing Person

Title of meeting:	Governance and Audit and Standards Committee Cabinet City Council
Date of meeting:	Governance and Audit and Standards Committee 05 November 2021 Cabinet 30 November 2021 City Council 07 December 2021
Subject:	Decision to Opt into the National Scheme for Auditor Appointments Managed by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) as the Appointing Person
Report by:	Chris Ward, Director of Finance and Resources (Section 151 Officer)
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	Yes

1. Purpose of report

This report sets out proposals for appointing the external auditor to the Council/Authority for the accounts for the five-year period from 2023/24.

2. Recommendations

That the Council accepts Public Sector Audit Appointments' (PSAA) invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 01 April 2023.

3. Background

The Council opted into the 'appointing person' national auditor appointment arrangements established by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the periods covering the accounts for 2012/13 to 2017/18 and 2018/19 to 2022/23. PSAA's auditor appointment arrangements have resulted in a reduction in fees for external audit services from £330,000 in respect of the audit for the 2011/12 accounts, which was the last audit undertaken by the Audit Commission, to £145,000 in respect of the 2019/20 audit.

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PSAA is now undertaking a procurement for the next appointing period, covering audits for 2023/24 to 2027/28. During Autumn 2021 all local government bodies need to make important decisions about their external audit arrangements from 2023/24. They have options to arrange their own procurement and make the appointment themselves or in conjunction with other bodies, or they can join and take advantage of the national collective scheme administered by PSAA.

If the Council wishes to take advantage of the national auditor appointment arrangements, it is required under the local audit regulations to make the decision at full Council. The opt-in period starts on 22 September 2021 and closes on 11 March 2022. To opt into the national scheme from 2023/24, the Council/Authority needs to return completed opt-in documents to PSAA by 11 March 2022.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

The sector-wide procurement conducted by PSAA will produce better outcomes and will be less burdensome for the Council than a procurement undertaken locally because:

- collective procurement reduces costs for the sector and for individual authorities compared to a multiplicity of smaller local procurements;
- if it does not use the national appointment arrangements, the Council will need to establish its own auditor panel with an independent chair and independent members to oversee a local auditor procurement and ongoing management of an audit contract;
- it is the best opportunity to secure the appointment of a qualified, registered auditor - there are only nine accredited local audit firms, and a local procurement would be drawing from the same limited supply of auditor resources as PSAA's national procurement; and
- supporting the sector-led body offers the best way of ensuring there is a continuing and sustainable public audit market into the medium and long term.

5. Integrated impact assessment

An integrated impact assessment is not required as the recommendations do not directly impact on service or policy delivery. Any changes made arising from this report would be subject to investigation in their own right.

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6. Legal Implications

The Section 151 Officer is required by the Local Government Act 1972 and by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to ensure that the Council’s budgeting, financial management, and accounting practices meet the relevant statutory and professional requirements. Members must have regard to and be aware of the wider duties placed on the Council by various statutes governing the conduct of its financial affairs.

7. Director of Finance and Resources (Section 151 Officer) comments

All financial considerations are contained within the body of the report.

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Signed by Director of Finance and Resources (Section 151 Officer)

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<u>Title of document</u>	Location
1 Correspondence from PSAA	Financial Services