

## **Role of Chief Internal Auditor**

Lead Officer: Peter Lewis, Director of Finance

Author: Peter Lewis, Director of Finance

Contact Details: [pjlewis@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:pjlewis@somerset.gov.uk); 01823 359028

Cabinet Member: Mandy Chilcott, Cabinet Member - Resources

Division and Local Member: All

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1. Members of the Audit Committee have been used to excellent support from Martin Gerrish, Strategic Finance Manager for Governance, ECI and Corporate Services. Martin has undertaken the role of Chief Internal Auditor (CIA) for the last 8 years, and this has included being the client liaison point with our internal audit service, South West Audit Partnership (SWAP).
- 1.2. Martin has indicated his need to leave Somerset County Council, for personal reasons, so it has been necessary to consider how the role of CIA is carried out in future.
- 1.3. Discussions have been undertaken with Lisa Fryer, Assistant Director at SWAP to understand how SWAP may be able to assist with the CIA role. This report describes the outcome of those discussions.

### **2. Issues for consideration / recommendations**

- 2.1. The Audit Committee will wish to be reassured that the Committee and the Council have access to appropriate audit advice through a suitably independent person. The Committee has worked with Lisa Fryer and will hopefully be assured of the quality of her advice and that of SWAP.
- 2.2. It is recommended that the Committee notes and supports the reallocation of the CIA role in these circumstances.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1. As indicated above, Martin Gerrish is due to leave Somerset County Council after his notice period. There will be a number of gaps upon Martin's departure, not least in the role of CIA. It is essential that every local authority has a designated CIA with direct reporting line to the Director of Finance (S151 Officer) and with routine access to the Chief Executive, leading Members and the Audit Committee.
- 3.2. Discussions have been undertaken with Lisa Fryer at SWAP, who has spoken to the Director of Planning and Chief Executive of SWAP. They have indicated that for the majority of their clients Lisa or one of her colleagues would undertake the CIA role and they are all happy for the CIA role to move to SWAP. Indeed, Somerset County Council is unusual in having a member of staff designated as CIA alongside the SWAP functions.
- 3.3. It is therefore intended, upon Martin's departure, to officially recognise Lisa Fryer as the CIA for Somerset County Council. The Director of Finance (S151

Officer) will be the designated reporting line for the CIA and will carry out the client liaison role. The Director of Finance and CIA will work together to ensure that the Audit Committee is thoroughly supported as it is now with Martin's input.

**3.4.** Lisa Fryer and her SWAP colleagues have indicated that:

- There is no particular process to follow as far as SWAP are concerned as it is assumed that the work undertaken by SWAP will remain largely unchanged. Lisa noted that a discussion with the Audit Committee would be undertaken
- As the role undertaken will be largely unchanged there will be no additional cost to Somerset County Council
- It will be Lisa who will take on the Chief Internal Auditor role.

**3.5.** While Martin's departure will be a loss to the Council and to the Audit Committee in particular, it is intended that this new arrangement will provide the appropriate level of support to the Committee. Martin and Lisa are already working together to use his notice period to ensure a smooth transition to these new arrangements.

#### **4. Consultations undertaken**

**4.1.** Consultation has been undertaken to ensure that there is an appropriate allocation of duties with regards to the CIA role.

#### **5. Implications**

**5.1.** It is necessary to ensure that there is a revised and appropriate allocation of duties to maintain the good quality of service that Martin Gerrish has provided to the Council. The proposal in regard of the CIA role is one aspect of that appropriate allocation of duties.

**5.2.** There are no additional financial implications arising from the proposal to transfer the CIA role to SWAP.

#### **6. Background papers**

**6.1.** There are none

**Note** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author