

Terms of Reference

Audit and Compliance Committee

Adopted by the Board on 9th July 2024.

1. Introduction

The Shepherds Friendly Audit & Compliance Committee (“ACC”) is established under the Authority of the Board of The Shepherds Friendly Society Ltd (“the Society”) to assist the Board in monitoring the integrity of their annual report and accounts, as more fully described in the provisions below. The ACC provides a forum for independent oversight of the Audit and Compliance matters for the Society and any of its subsidiary companies and also ensures it meets its obligations under the Friendly Societies Act 1992, the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, the Financial Services Act 2012 and other Relevant Legislation.

2. Purpose

The Audit and Compliance Committee (ACC) is a body that will:

- 2.1 ensure that through its work the best interests of the Society’s members and customers are always considered and protected;
- 2.2 oversee the role of the “third line of defence” within the Society’s governance framework and in fulfilling its regulatory expectations, oversee the performance of internal and external audit;
- 2.3 independently evaluate assurance from management, internal audit and external audit regarding the financial statements, governance and systems of internal control;
- 2.4. provide guidance and recommendations to the Board of the Society on matters affecting the Society’s annual report and accounts;
- 2.5 advise the Board that it considers the annual report and accounts taken as a whole, are fair, balanced and understandable, and provide the information necessary for members to assess the Society’s performance, business model and strategy.
- 2.6 review the arrangements established by management for compliance with regulatory requirements.

3. Membership

- 3.1 The Committee will be appointed by the Board and will comprise of at least two members, all of whom must be independent Non-Executive Directors. The Committee shall include at least one member of the Board Risk Committee. The Board Chair shall not be a member of the Committee;
- 3.2 The Board will nominate one of the Non-Executive members of the Committee as Chair;

- 3.3 Any member should have the skills and experience necessary for them to make a useful contribution to the work of the Committee and at least one member of the Committee shall have recent and relevant financial experience;
- 3.4 Other attendees may be invited by the Committee Chair;
- 3.5 The Company Secretary acts as Secretary to the Committee.

4. Meetings

- 4.1 Meetings will normally be held a minimum of four times a year. Attendance may be in person, by teleconference call, or other form of electronic communication;
- 4.2 If the Committee Chair is unable to attend, the members of the Committee may appoint another non-executive member of the Committee as Chair;
- 4.3 The agenda will be prepared by the Company Secretary and agreed with the Committee Chair. The agenda will be circulated to all members and invited attendees at least ten days before the next meeting and support papers at least five;
- 4.4 Minutes of the meetings will be taken by the Company Secretary or such other person as the Committee Chair may nominate and will then be circulated to Committee members prior to the next meeting, and a Committee Chair Report is presented to the Board at the next Board meeting;
- 4.5 Two members are required to constitute a quorum. No business will be conducted in the absence of a quorum. A meeting will terminate as soon as it becomes inquorate;
- 4.6 The ACC should meet at least once a year with each of the internal and external auditors in the absence of executive Board members or management. The Committee Chair may request a private meeting with the external or internal auditors at any other time;
- 4.7 The Committee Chair will be responsible for summarising the Committee deliberations and any recommendations to the subsequent Board meeting.

5. Powers and Responsibilities of the Audit and Compliance Committee

The responsibilities and duties of this Committee will include the following:

5.1 Independent Auditors

- Make the necessary recommendation to the Board for the appropriate resourcing of internal audit whether in-house or outsourced, and the appointment, re-appointment or removal of the internal auditors;
- Make the necessary recommendation to the Board for the appointment, re-appointment or removal of the external auditors;

- Recommend the level of retainers, remuneration and any other contractual fee arrangements paid to auditors;
- Review and recommend to the Board any selection, contract terms and responsibilities (audit & non-audit) of any internal or external audit function and ensure the necessary processes are in place to monitor and review performance and independence;
- Consider the independence of the External Auditor taking into consideration relevant professional and regulatory requirements, in particular the level of non-audit work provided by the External Auditor;
- To develop and implement a policy on the supply of non-audit services by the external auditor.

5.2 Financial Reporting and Systems of Internal Control

- Review and agree the policies and processes of the Society, with any significant changes being recommended to the Board;
- Consider the planning and completion reports provided by the External Auditors, the audit report and the Letter of Representation from the External Auditors highlighting key issues to the Board;
- Review significant financial reporting estimates and judgments contained in financial statements, raising any areas of concern to the Board;
- Review and consider the recommendations made by the Society's Actuary on the methods and assumptions to be used in preparing the technical provisions and capital requirements as set out in the Society's financial statements and regulatory returns, highlighting key issues to the Board;
- Review and approve the statements to be included in the annual report regarding going concern and the viability statement;
- Seek assurance that the systems of internal control and risk management systems are fit for purpose and operating effectively;
- Liaise with the Board Risk Committee ("BRC") to determine the levels of assurance over key risk areas, and ensure that control failings are reported to the BRC;
- Review the integrity of the Society's financial statements, seek auditor assurance that they give a "true and fair view" and recommend to the Board whether to approve them;
- Ensure that reports supporting the financial statements are fair and consistent and compliant with relevant legal requirements and the AFM Corporate Governance Code ("The AFM Code");
- Monitor any formal announcements relating to the Society's financial performance.
- Review tax compliance and tax planning initiatives

5.3 Internal Audit

- Oversee the development and implementation of a prioritised work plan for internal audit and recommend to the Board that the annual Internal Audit Plan is approved;
- Review promptly reports and information submitted by Internal Audit, consider any significant control weaknesses highlighted by the reports and consider the adequacy of management's responses;
- Review the effectiveness of the work carried out by Internal Audit and ensure that Internal Audit is aligned to the appropriate standards and the Financial Services Code of Practice.

5.4 Compliance

- Review the completeness and adequacy of the Annual Assurance Compliance Plan and monitor results;
- Monitor and assess the role and effectiveness of the Compliance Monitoring Function, taking into account the work of the Internal Auditor;
- Review reports from the Society's Money Laundering Reporting Officer to seek assurance that procedures and controls are up to date and effective, and that breaches are dealt with appropriately;
- Support liaison between external audit, internal audit and compliance;
- Review minutes and reports of the BRC to ensure that any issues affecting the agenda of the ACC are identified and addressed.

5.5 Regulatory Reporting

- Review the Solvency Financial Condition Report and if required seek assurance from the external auditors that they have audited the relevant sections of the Report, and that in their opinion it had been prepared in accordance with the financial reporting provisions of the PRA Rules. (Relevant sections that may be reviewed by external auditors are the 'Valuation for solvency purposes' and 'Capital Management').

5.6 Whistleblowing and fraud

- Review annually the Society's whistle-blowing policy to ensure it includes provision for arrangements whereby staff may in confidence raise concerns about potential improprieties;
- Receive whistle blowing reports and ensure that arrangements are in place for the proportionate independent investigation of possible improprieties in matters of financial reporting or other matters and appropriate follow-up action;
- Review the adequacy and security of the Society's arrangements for its employees and contractors to raise concerns, in confidence, about possible wrongdoing in financial reporting or other matters. The Committee shall ensure that these arrangements allow proportionate and independent investigation of such matters and appropriate follow up action;
- Review the company's procedures for preventing and detecting fraud;
- Review the company's systems and controls for the prevention of bribery.

5.7 Other

- Review Management's annual self-assessment against The AFM Code and ensure any areas of concern are escalated to the Board;
- Consider and make recommendations on any other issues as requested by the Board;
- Monitor potential Conflicts of Interest.
- Ensure that the best interests of the Society's members and all stakeholders are considered in line with the Society's Consumer Duty policy (including those who are vulnerable or potentially vulnerable) as appropriate to the remit of the work undertaken by the Committee.

In the exercise of such responsibilities, the Committee has agreed that additional participants and information, as specified below, will provide further input to the deliberations of the Committee. These are:

- Any internal and external auditor will have access to the Audit and Compliance Committee, without the presence of the management of the Society, at least once a year;

- The Committee will seek the considered input from the Executives to clarify matters raised as concerns for action by Internal or External Audit;
- The Committee will take advantage of the input and advice offered by the BRC.

6. Escalation and Reporting Structure

- 6.1 The ACC will report directly to the Board with a spokesman as nominated by the Committee, usually the Committee Chair.
- 6.2 Internal and External Audit will report directly to the Chair of the ACC for audit related matters and to the Chief Executive for day-to-day operational matters.
- 6.3 Matters that are deemed to be outside the responsibilities of ACC will be raised at Board Level.

7. Authority

- 7.1 The ACC may inspect any records of the Society and seek information from any of its Employees.
- 7.2 The ACC may seek external legal and professional advice if this is required for it to fulfil its duties and responsibilities.

8. External communication

- 8.1 Be represented at the Annual General Meeting to respond to members' questions on Committee activities.
- 8.2 Ensure that all regulatory reporting conforms to legislative and/or regulatory reporting as required by PRA, FCA and Statutory Financial Statements.

9. Self Appraisal

On an annual basis the ACC should formally appraise its performance against its role, objectives and Terms of Reference, and minute the extent to which it has met its requirements, together with an action plan should any shortcomings be identified.