

Audit and Risk Committee Report continued

In accordance with best ethical standards, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP has processes in place designed to maintain independence, including the rotation of the audit engagement partner at least every five years. As a result of these processes, the previous audit engagement partner stepped-down following the conclusion of the 2019 audit and, following a handover period, the current audit engagement partner, Christopher Hibbs, assumed full responsibility.

The Committee has also adopted policies to safeguard the independence of its external auditors. Any work awarded to the external auditors with a value of more than £5,000 in aggregate in any financial year, other than an audit, requires the specific approval of the Committee. Where the Committee perceives that the independence of the auditors could be compromised, the work will not be awarded to the auditors. Details of amounts paid to PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP for audit and audit related assurance services in 2020 are set out on page 133. The audit related assurance services provided during the year were in relation to the half-year report (£35,000) and the sustainability measure which was introduced into the Company's banking facility (£25,000).

Prior to recommending the appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP at the forthcoming AGM to the Board, the Committee reviewed the audit process, the performance of the auditor and its ongoing independence, taking into consideration:

- an assessment of the lead audit partner and the audit team, including their responses to questions from the Committee;
- a review of the audit approach, scope, determination of significant risk areas and materiality;
- the execution of the audit and the audit findings reported;
- input from, and interaction with, management and communication with, and support to, the Committee;
- the quality of any recommendation points; and
- a review of independence, objectivity and scepticism.

Based on this review, the Committee concluded that the external audit process had been run efficiently and that PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP has been effective in its role as external auditor.

The Committee is satisfied that the independence of the external auditor is not impaired and the level of fees paid for non-audit services, details of which are set out in Note 5 to the Financial Statements, does not jeopardise its independence. In conclusion, the Committee has assessed the performance and independence of the external auditor and recommended to the Board the re-appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP as auditor until the AGM in 2022.

Whistleblowing and bribery

The Audit and Risk Committee monitors any reported incidents under our whistleblowing policy, which is available to all employees. This policy sets out the procedure for employees to raise legitimate concerns about any wrongdoing without fear of criticism, discrimination or reprisal.

During the year, there were no reports received through the whistleblowing process.

The Audit and Risk Committee also takes responsibility for reviewing the policies and procedures adopted by the Group to prevent bribery. The Group is committed to a zero-tolerance position with regard to bribery. The Committee is satisfied that the Group's procedures with respect to these matters are adequate.