

HIGHCROFT

I N V E S T M E N T S P L C

Highcroft Investments PLC (the “company”)

Audit Committee terms of reference

Approved by the board on 27 March 2023

1.	ROLE
	<p>The role of the audit committee (the “committee”) is to assist the board in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities by reviewing and monitoring, among other things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The integrity of the group’s financial and narrative statements and related announcements• The effectiveness of the group’s internal controls and risk management• The effectiveness of the external audit process, and• The group’s relationship with the external auditor
2.	MEMBERSHIP
2.1	<p>The committee shall comprise at least two members. Members of the committee shall be appointed by the board, on the recommendation of the nomination committee in consultation with the chairman of the audit committee.</p>
2.2	<p>All members of the committee shall be independent non-executive directors at least one of whom shall have recent and relevant financial experience ideally, but not necessarily, with a professional qualification from one of the professional accountancy bodies. The chairman of the board may be a member of, but not chair of, the committee provided he was independent on appointment as chairman.</p>
2.3	<p>Only members of the committee have the right to attend committee meetings. However, the external auditor and finance director will be invited to attend meetings of the committee on a regular basis and other non-members may be invited to attend all or part of any meeting as and when appropriate and necessary.</p>
2.4	<p>The board shall appoint the committee chairman.</p>
3.	SECRETARY
3.1	<p>The company secretary, or his or her nominee, shall act as the secretary of the committee and will ensure that the committee receives information and papers in a timely manner to enable full and proper consideration to be given to issues.</p>
4.	QUORUM
4.1	<p>The quorum necessary for the transaction of business shall be two members.</p>
5.	MEETINGS
5.1	<p>The committee shall meet at least three times a year at appropriate intervals in the financial reporting and audit cycle and otherwise as required.</p>

5.2	Outside of the formal meeting programme, the committee chairman will maintain a dialogue with key individuals involved in the company's governance, including the board chairman, the chief executive, the finance director and the external audit lead partner.	
5.3	Meetings of the committee shall be convened by the secretary of the committee at the request of any of its members or at the request of the external audit lead partner if they consider it necessary.	
5.4	Unless otherwise agreed, notice of each meeting confirming the venue, time and date together with an agenda of items to be discussed, shall be forwarded to each member of the committee, any other person required to attend and all other non-executive directors, no later than three days before the date of the meeting. Supporting papers shall be sent to committee members and to other attendees as appropriate, at the same time.	
5.5	Meetings of the committee may be conducted when the members are physically present together or in the form of either video or audio conferences.	
6.	MINUTES OF MEETINGS	
6.1	The secretary shall minute the proceedings and decisions of all meetings of the committee, including recording the names of those present and in attendance.	
6.2	Draft minutes of committee meetings shall be circulated promptly to all members of the committee. Once approved, minutes should be circulated to all other members of the board unless it would be inappropriate to do so in the opinion of the committee chairman.	
7.	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	
7.1	The committee chairman should attend the annual general meeting to answer shareholder questions on the committee's activities.	
8.	DUTIES	
	The committee should carry out the duties below for the parent company, the subsidiary undertakings and the group as a whole, as appropriate.	
8.1	Financial Reporting	
	8.1.1	The committee shall monitor the integrity of the financial statements of the company, including its annual and half-yearly reports, interim reports, and any other formal announcement relating to its financial performance, reviewing and reporting to the board on significant financial reporting issues and judgements which they contain having regard to matters communicated to it by the auditor.
	8.1.2	In particular, the committee shall review and challenge where necessary:
	8.1.2.1	the consistency, quality and appropriateness of, and any changes to, significant accounting policies both on a year-on-year basis and across the company/group;
	8.1.2.2	the methods used to account for significant or unusual transactions where different approaches are possible;
	8.1.2.3	whether the company has followed appropriate accounting standards and made appropriate estimates and judgements, taking into account the views of the external auditor;

	8.1.2.4	the clarity and completeness of disclosure in the company's financial reports and the context in which statements are made; and
	8.1.2.5	all material information presented with the financial statements, such as the business review and the corporate governance statements relating to the audit and to risk management.
	8.1.2.6	the assumptions or qualifications in support of the going concern statement (including any material uncertainties as to the Company's ability to continue as a going concern over a period of at least twelve months from the date of approval of the financial statements) and the longer-term viability statement (including an assessment of the prospects of the Company and the Group looking forward over an appropriate and justified period).
	8.1.3	Where the committee is not satisfied with any aspect of the proposed financial reporting by the company, it shall report its views to the board
8.2	Narrative Reporting	
	8.2.1	Where requested by the board, the committee should review the content of the annual report and accounts and advise the board on whether, taken as a whole, it is fair, balanced and understandable and provides the information necessary for shareholders to assess the company's performance, business model and strategy.
	8.2.2	Oversee on behalf of the Board, ESG reporting and related climate and financial disclosures.
8.3	Internal controls and risk management systems	
	The committee shall:	
	8.3.1	keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of the company's internal financial controls and internal control and risk management systems; and
	8.3.2	review and approve the statements to be included in the annual report concerning internal controls and risk management.
	8.3.3	On behalf of the board, ensure that an ongoing robust assessment of the emerging and principal risks facing the Company has been undertaken (including those risks that would threaten its business model, future performance, solvency or liquidity and reputation) and that a process of identification of associated opportunities has also been conducted and provide advice on the management and mitigation of those risks. and opportunities.
8.4	Compliance, whistleblowing and fraud	
	The committee shall:	
	8.4.1	review the adequacy and security of the company'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;
	8.4.2	review the company's procedures for detecting fraud
	8.4.3	review the company's systems and controls for the prevention of bribery and receive reports on non-compliance;
8.5	Internal audit	
	The committee shall consider annually whether there should be an internal audit function and make a recommendation to the board accordingly;	

8.6	External audit		
	The committee shall:		
	8.6.1	consider and make recommendations to the board, to be put to shareholders for approval at the AGM, in relation to the appointment, re-appointment and removal of the company's external auditor;	
	8.6.2	ensure that at the audit services contract is put out to tender periodically to enable the committee to compare the quality and effectiveness of the services provided by the incumbent auditor with those of other audit firms; and in respect of such tender oversee the selection process and ensure that all tendering firms have such access as is necessary to information and individuals during the duration of the tendering process;	
	8.6.3	if an auditor resigns, investigate the issues leading to this and decide whether any action is required;	
	8.6.4	oversee the relationship with the external auditor including (but not limited to):	
		8.6.4.1	recommendations on their remuneration, including both fees for audit and non-audit services, and that the level of fees is appropriate to enable an effective and high quality audit to be conducted;
		8.6.4.2	approval of their terms of engagement, including any engagement letter issued at the start of each audit and the scope of the audit;
		8.6.4.3	assessing annually their independence and objectivity taking into account relevant UK professional and regulatory requirements and the relationship with the auditor as a whole, including the provision of any non-audit services;
		8.6.4.4	satisfying itself that there are no relationships (such as family, employment, investment, financial or business) between the auditor and the company (other than in the ordinary course of business) which could adversely affect the auditor's independence and objectivity;
		8.6.4.5	agreeing with the board a policy on the employment of former employees of the company's auditor, and monitoring the implementation of this policy;
		8.6.4.6	monitoring the auditor's compliance with relevant ethical and professional guidance on the rotation of audit partner, the level of fees paid by the company compared to the overall fee income of the firm, office and partner and other related requirements;
		8.6.4.7	assessing annually the qualifications, expertise and resources of the auditor and the effectiveness of the audit process, which shall include a report from the external auditor on their own internal quality procedures;
		8.6.4.8	seeking to ensure co-ordination with the activities of the internal audit function; and
		8.6.4.9	evaluating the risks to the quality and effectiveness of the financial reporting process and consideration of the need to include the risk of the withdrawal of their auditor from the market in that evaluation.

	8.6.5	meet regularly with the external auditor (including once at the planning stage before the audit and once after the audit at the reporting stage) and at least once a year, without management being present, to discuss the auditor's remit and any issues arising from the audit;
	8.6.6	review and approve the annual audit plan and ensure that it is consistent with the scope of the audit engagement, having regard to the seniority, expertise and experience of the audit team; and
	8.6.7	review the findings of the audit with the external auditor. This shall include but not be limited to, the following:
	8.6.7.1	a discussion of any major issues which arose during the audit;
	8.6.7.2	key accounting and audit judgements;
	8.6.7.3	levels of errors identified during the audit; and
	8.6.7.4	the effectiveness of the audit process
	8.6.8	review any representation letter(s) requested by the external auditor before they are signed by management;
	986.9	review the management letter and management's response to the auditor's findings and recommendations; and
	8.6.10	develop and implement policy on the supply of non-audit services by the external auditor to avoid any threat to auditor objectivity and independence, taking into account any relevant ethical guidance on the matter.
9.	REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES	
9.1	The committee chairman shall report formally to the board on its proceedings after each meeting on all matters within its duties and responsibilities and shall also formally report to the board on how it has discharged its responsibilities.	
	This report shall include:	
	9.1.1	the significant issues that it considered in relation to the financial statements (required under paragraph 8.1.1) and how these were addressed;
	9.1.2	its assessment of the effectiveness of the external audit process (required under paragraph 8.6.4.7) and its recommendation on the appointment or reappointment of the external auditor; and
	9.1.3	any other issues on which the Board has requested the committee's opinion.
9.2	The committee shall make whatever recommendations to the board it deems appropriate on any area within its remit where action or improvement is needed	
9.3	The committee shall compile a report on its activities to be included in the company's annual report. The report should include an explanation of how the committee has addressed the effectiveness of the external audit process; the significant issues that the committee considered in relation to the financial statements and how these issues were addressed, having regard to matters communicated to it by the auditor; and all other information requirements set out in the Code.	
9.4	In the compiling the reports referred to in 9.1 and 9.3, the committee should exercise judgement in deciding which of the issues it considers in relation to the financial statements are significant, but should include at least those matters that have informed the board's assessment of whether the company is a going concern and the viability statement. The report to shareholders need not repeat information disclosed elsewhere in the annual report and accounts, but could provide cross-references to that information.	
10.	OTHER MATTERS	
	The committee shall:	

10.1	have access to sufficient resources in order to carry out its duties, including access to the company secretary for assistance as required;
10.2	be provided with appropriate and timely training;
10.3	give due consideration to laws and regulations, the provisions of the Code and the requirements of the UK Listing Authority's Listing, Prospectus and Disclosure and Transparency Rules and any other applicable rules, as appropriate;
10.4	oversee any investigation of activities which are within its terms of reference;
10.5	work and liaise as necessary with all other board committees;
10.6	arrange for periodic reviews of its own performance and, at least annually, review its constitution and terms of reference to ensure it is operating at maximum effectiveness and recommend any changes it considers necessary to the board
11.	AUTHORITY
	The committee is authorised to:
11.1	seek any information it requires from any employee of the company in order to perform its duties;
11.2	obtain, at the company's expense, independent legal, accounting or other professional advice on any matter it believes it necessary to do so;
11.3	call any employee to be questioned at a meeting of the committee as and when required; and
11.4	have the right to publish in the company's annual report, details of any issues that cannot be resolved between the committee and the board