



TO: Audit & Governance Committee

FROM: Strategic Director, Finance & Resources
Deputy Director, Legal & Governance

DATE: 25 June 2024

PORTFOLIOS AFFECTED: All

WARDS AFFECTED: All

TITLE OF BRIEFING PAPER Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report

1. PURPOSE

The draft Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report 2023/24 is attached for consideration and approval (Appendix A). This summarises the work undertaken, and reports considered by the Committee during the year to demonstrate that it has fulfilled its agreed terms of reference.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

- Consider and approve the Committee's Annual Report; and
- Refer the report to Full Council for endorsement.

3. BACKGROUND

The CIPFA 'Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police' 2022 edition incorporates CIPFA's Position Statement on Audit Committees in Local Authorities and the Police as well as setting out the purpose and core functions of an audit committee. This notes that although no single model of committee is prescribed, all should report regularly on their work and at least annually report an assessment of their performance.

4. RATIONALE

The Audit & Governance Committee is a key component of the maintenance of an adequate and effective governance framework. Through its annual report the Committee can demonstrate its effectiveness in fulfilling its role to provide independent assurance regarding the adequacy of risk management, the overall governance and associated control environment, and also scrutiny of the Council's financial and non financial performance to the extent that it affects its exposure to risk and weakens the control environment.

5. KEY ISSUES

Having an effective Committee brings many benefits to the Council, such as:

- increasing public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting;
- providing additional assurance through a process of independent and objective scrutiny;
- raising awareness of the need for internal control and the implementation of audit recommendations; and,
- reinforcing the importance and independence of internal audit.

The Committee's activities during 2023/24 were designed to make a positive contribution to the continual improvement of control, governance and risk management arrangements across the Council, as well as performing the roles set out for the Committee in the Council's Constitution.

The Committee has had the opportunity to examine and challenge the arrangements for effective governance thorough the reporting arrangements that are in place. The detail set out in the Annual Report attached as an Appendix to this report indicates the breadth of the Committee's work in ensuring that key aspects of the Council's work should be compliant with expected standards of governance, control and/or risk management and transparent to its stakeholders. The reports received by the Committee during 2023/24 indicate that there has been thorough coverage of the Committee's Terms of Reference. In this way, the Annual Report demonstrates the value of the Committee to the Council and public, ensuring that governance and internal control arrangements are on a sound footing.

Good practice guidance exists for the effective operation of audit committees across the public sector, including the most recent publication by CIPFA noted above. That guidance includes a Self-Assessment of Good Practice. This was completed on behalf of the Committee during the year and was considered at its meeting on 18 March 2024. Appendix 2 of the attached report sets out the result from the self-assessment. The guidance also included a tool for audit committees to use to evaluate their effectiveness. The results of this assessment are set out in Appendix 3 to the attached report for reference.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct policy implications arising from this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications from this report.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The resource implications are within the report.

10. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

The decisions to be taken do not change policy and do not require any further consideration in respect of equality or health issues.

11. CONSULTATIONS

Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee.

Contact Officer: Colin Ferguson, Head of Audit & Assurance - Ext 5326
Date: 13 June 2024
Background Papers: CIPFA Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2022 Edition).