

**Minutes of the Audit Committee
10 July 2025**

Present:

Councillor J. Button (Chair)
Councillor K. Howkins (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

Neall	D. Saliagopoulos	P.N. Woodward
L. E. Nichols	H.R.D. Williams	P. Briggs

31/25 Apologies and Substitutes

There were none.

32/25 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2025 were approved as a correct record.

33/25 Disclosures of Interest

The Committee noted as part of the CIPFA Audit Committee Self-Assessment Good Practice Guidance, chairs of the Council's policy committees were recommended not to be members of the Audit Committee. The Committee acknowledged this was not yet adopted and could be considered for future implementation.

Councillor Williams declared he was Chair of the Council's Business, Infrastructure, and Growth Committee.

34/25 Committee Forward Plan

The Committee considered its Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

A member of the Committee queried items missing from the forward plan.

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed the Draft Statement of Accounts, and Value for Money reports from BDO should be on the agenda for the September meeting and strongly requested that a representative from BDO be asked to attend September's Committee meeting in person. Sinking Fund

Modelling would be added to the Forward Plan when an appropriate date was agreed with Commissioners.

It was agreed that the Chair would liaise with Committee Services to agree an additional date for the Committee to meet if September's agenda proved to be too heavy with items to discuss.

Resolved that the Committee Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal year be approved.

35/25 Internal Audit Charter 2025-26

The Committee considered the Internal Audit Charter for 2025-2026.

The Deputy Head of the Southern Internal Audit Partnership updated the Committee on the amendments made since it was last presented to the Committee.

The Committee **resolved** to approve the Internal Audit Charter 2025-26.

36/25 Internal Audit Progress Report

The Committee received the Internal Audit Progress report from the South Internal Audit Partnership (SIAP), which outlined activity against the Internal Audit plan 2024/2025. The representative from SIAP advised that due to a delayed start to the year and challenges with officer capacity, the overall internal audit conclusion would be presented to a future committee. The Committee were provided with a summary of reports finalised, reports delivered in draft, and reports in-progress. Overall, it was predicted the anticipated overall conclusion would conclude with limited assurance on governance, risk and control. Summaries of completed audits would be provided to the Committee through the overall internal audit conclusion.

The Committee explored the reasons for delays. The Committee were provided assurance that work on the next year's audit was already being undertaken with a view to provide a final report earlier. The Committee noted the outstanding actions from previous audits and requested that a status update be provided to the next Committee.

The Committee **resolved** to agreed they had been informed and assured of Internal Audit Progress.

37/25 External Audit Plan

The Committee considered the External Audit Plan for year ending 31 March 2025 from Grant Thornton. The representative from Grant Thornton set out the planned scope of the external audit plan and significant identified risks, and highlighted where there had been delays. Part of the delayed work

related to the Draft Statement of Accounts, but work was underway with officers with a view to finish the work by December. Value for Money work had commenced for 24/25, and the team had met with Officers, Commissioners, and some councillors.

Members of the Committee explored risks identified in the plan and how they were being addressed. The Committee also acknowledged key issues raised in previous audits related to MRP and queried how the recommendation would be addressed. The Deputy Chief Executive advised additional expertise had been brought in to assist with producing the draft statement of accounts and addressing MRP to ensure the recommendation was fully addressed and resolved.

A member of the Committee expressed an interest in receiving an earlier progress report or assurance on a number of issues set out in the plan, and requested an interim progress report. Grant Thornton acknowledged they were required to follow-up on recommendations from previous reports to explore what processes had been put in place to address those recommendations.

The Committee **resolved** to agree the External Audit Plan for year ending 31 March 2025.

Meeting adjourned 20:48

Meeting reconvened 21:01

38/25 Corporate Risk Register (Corporate Risk Management)

The Committee received a report on the Corporate Risk Register from the Deputy Chief Executive. The report highlighted the Council's continued efforts to identify, monitor, and manage its most significant strategic risks in relation to the delivery of corporate priorities. There had been no changes to scores or RAG ratings since last presented. Another category regarding Contract Management would be added for presentation to the next Committee. The Committee acknowledged the Council was seeking advice regarding risk management that may impact on future format and presentation of the risk register and its presentation to other Committees.

Some members of the Committee commented on individual risks and their ratings and expressed concern that they should have a higher rating. The Deputy Chief Executive provided reasons behind the rating, but advised if there were any changes it would be re-evaluated. The Committee also acknowledged they had previously been provided with a comprehensive action plan addressing recommendations from various audits and reports, but this had not been provided. The Chair advised the Commissioners were reviewing the action plan, but it would be provided at a future meeting. This also coincided with the work on an Improvement and Recovery Plan.

The Committee **resolved** to consider the significant strategic risks and issues highlighted in this report and present these to the Corporate Policy and

Resources Committee, ensuring continued wider reporting of the Corporate Risk Register and actions across other Committees.

39/25 Update on Building Control

The Committee received an update from the Group Head – Place, Protection and Prosperity on the Council's Building Control Service and challenges. The Committee were provided with an overview of the status of Building Control services nationwide and its local impacts. An internal audit of the Council's service was also undertaken alongside an external audit from the Building Safety Regulator, both which highlighted areas for improvement. In anticipation of a letter of contravention and action plan, a number of actions had already been taken to address areas of concern. A further update would be provided when the external audit was received from the Building Safety Regulator.

The Committee explored the reasons the external audit may be unfavourable, especially in regard to the IT and quality management systems. The Committee requested further information regarding possible differences in the quality management systems in the private and public Building Control sector. The Committee acknowledged that following two audit reports regarding the Building Control service, assurance would need to be provided that a plan would be put in place to address any recommendations. The Group Head – Place, Protection and Prosperity assured the Committee that all threads from the audits would be pulled together alongside an action plan to be presented to the Committee.

The Committee **resolved** to note the update on the Building Control service and challenges.

40/25 Approach to Risk Management Training

It was proposed by Councillor Woodward, seconded by Councillor Howkins and **resolved** to exclude the public and press for the discussion of this agenda item, in accordance with paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) because it was likely to disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The Committee received a presentation regarding a review of the Council's Risk Management arrangements. The Committee were provided with the scope of the review which would focus on the Council's risk management policy and registers, review how risk was reported to committees, and seek to embed risk management across the Council's documents and policies. The review would seek to shift the focus on risk to provide assurance that the

governance arrangements in place should facilitate the Council's success, achievement and delivery.

Some members of the Committee expressed support for the approach. The Committee were assured that the Commissioners had engaged with the presenter, and political group leaders would be involved in providing steer.

In accordance with Standing Order 38.4, the meeting adjourned at 10.30pm.

41/25 CIPFA Audit Committee Self-Assessment

This item was considered after item 7, "External Audit Plan".

It was proposed by Councillor Woodward, seconded by Councillor Howkins and **resolved** to exclude the public and press for the discussion of this agenda item, in accordance with paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) because it was likely to disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The Committee received a presentation on undertaking a CIPFA Audit Committee Self-Assessment. The self-assessment would include a review of the effectiveness of the Audit Committee, how the Committee deals with guidance, and the Council's arrangements for risk management. The review would seek to address the recommendations from the Best Value Inspection and External Audit, consider any areas where the scope of the Committee's work could be strengthened, and identify areas for improvement and develop an improvement plan. This would be presented at a future meeting.

The Committee noted the guidance had been issued in 2022, but had not been incorporated into the Council's Audit Committee arrangements. This was something that could be considered as part of the self-assessment.

Councillor Saliagopoulos left the meeting 21:22.

It was proposed by Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Howkins and **resolved** to suspend Standing Orders for the meeting to continue until 10.30pm.

The actions that would be taken as part of the self-assessment, and how any recommendations would be dealt with would be presented to the Committee in the future.

The Committee **resolved** to approve commencing a Self-Assessment review of the Committee and associated arrangements against CIPFA Guidance and checklist and broader best practice for Audit Committees.

42/25 Argus Software Discussion

This item was not discussed and will be considered on the next agenda in accordance with Standing Order 38.4.