SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Committee Report Checklist

**Please submit the completed checklists with your report. If final draft report does not include all the information/sign offs required, your item will be delayed until the next meeting cycle.**

**Stage 1**
**Report checklist – responsibility of report owner**

| ITEM | Yes / No | Date |
|---|---|---|
| Councillor engagement / input from Chair prior to briefing | Y | |
| Relevant Group Head review | Y | 25/06/26 |
| MAT+ review (to have been circulated **at least 5 working days before Stage 2**) | Y | 30/06/26 |
| This item is on the Forward Plan for the relevant committee | Y | |
| | **Reviewed by** | |
| Finance comments (circulate to Finance) | AB | 02/07/26 |
| Risk comments (circulate to Lee O'Neil) | LO | 25/06/26 |
| Legal comments (circulate to Legal team) | LH | 02/07/26 |
| HR comments (if applicable) | | |

**For reports with material financial or legal implications the author should engage with the respective teams at the outset and receive input to their reports prior to asking for MO or s151 comments.**

**Do not forward to stage 2 unless all the above have been completed.**

**Stage 2**
**Report checklist – responsibility of report owner**

| ITEM | Completed by | Date rec'd |
|---|---|---|
| Monitoring Officer commentary – at least **5 working days before MAT** | **L Heron** | **02/07/26** |
| S151 Officer commentary – at least **5 working days before MAT** | **T.Collier** | **25/6/26** |
| Commissioner engagement | | |
| | Delete as applicable: | Comments in S. 7 |
| Confirm final report cleared by MAT | | |

# Corporate Policy and Resources Committee

## 13 July 2026

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title** | Governance Assurance Register update |
| **Purpose of the report** | To inform and assure |
| **Report Author** | Lee O'Neil, Deputy Chief Executive |
| **Ward(s) Affected** | All Wards |
| **Exempt** | No |
| **Exemption Reason** | Not applicable |
| **Corporate Priority** | Community<br>Addressing Housing Need<br>Resilience<br>Environment<br>Services |
| **Recommendations** | **Committee is is asked to:**<br><br>a. Note progress with implementation of the Council's Governance Assurance Framework and Policy.<br>b. Note the current overall assurance level for the 12 Governance Assurance Areas (**Appendix A**), which forms the new Governance Assurance Register.<br>c. Consider the key areas of focus concerning the Governance Assurance Area relating to Financial Management as outlined in **Appendix B**.<br>d. Consider the next Governance Assurance Reports to be presented to the Committee at future meetings, as outlined in paragraph 2.12. |
| **Reason for Recommendation** | To enable the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to review progress with implementation of the Governance Assurance Framework and scrutinise performance for key governance areas relating to its remit. |

1. **Executive summary of the report** *(expand detail in Key Issues section below)*

| What is the situation | Why we want to do something |
|---|---|
| • As part of ongoing improvements to the Council's Risk Management arrangements | • The change to a governance assurance approach forms part of a range of |

| | |
|---|---|
| the authority has moved to a governance assurance-based approach.<br>• A new Governance Assurance Framework/ Policy was approved, and a new Governance Assurance Register has been developed to replace the previous Corporate Risk Register for consideration by the Audit Committee.<br>• The 12 Governance Assurance Areas (GAAs) which form the new Governance Assurance Register have been presented to the Audit Committee to provide assurance that effective arrangements are in place to manage key issues, concerns and areas of focus for the Council. | improvements to the Council's risk management arrangements following comments received in a number of external reviews. |
| **This is what we want to do about it** | **These are the next steps** |
| • Ensure that CPRC is advised of progress with the implementation of the Council's Governance Assurance Framework.<br>• Provide the CPRC with an opportunity to consider and scrutinise the area of focus, concerns and issues within their remit. | • Agree a programme of updates relating to the GAAs under CPRC's remit to be implemented over the municipal year. |

## 2. Key issues

2.1 In response to recommendations made in the Best Value Inspection and Grant Thornton's External Audit of this authority, the Council has been improving its risk management arrangements, moving to a new Governance Assurance-based approach.

2.2 This approach focuses on the effectiveness of the Council's governance and control arrangements, ensuring that this authority can deliver its objectives and corporate and service responsibilities in a more positive way, and that stakeholders receive sufficient assurance that appropriate arrangements are in place.

2.3 A new Governance Assurance Policy and Framework was agreed by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee (CPRC) on 19 January 2026.

2.4 Since that time, work has progressed identifying the key areas of assurance, and the processes and systems required to enable effective development, implementation and management of the Council's governance assurance arrangements. As part of that work, the Council's previous Corporate Risk Register has been adapted and aligned into a new Governance Assurance Register focusing on 12 key Governance Assurance Areas (GAAs), which are outlined in **Appendix A** together with the current overall level of assurance for each of those areas (shown as low, medium or high).

2.5 The current Governance Assurance Register for the Council is available as a **Background Paper.**

2.6 Training has been provided to key officers and Members outlining how the new approach has been developed, how it would operate in practice, and the format of reports to be received by both the Audit Committee and Service Committees. To date 49 officers and 24 Councillors have attended the training provided by the Council's external governance assurance/risk management advisor, Rob Winter. A further training session is being arranged for any Members who have not attended one of the sessions to date.

2.7 Under these new arrangements the Audit Committee and Service Committees (including CPRC) have distinct functions. The Audit Committee's key role in relation to risk management, governance and internal control is to consider the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements for these, including overseeing the relevant policies and strategies and crucially being assured that key governance areas are owned and managed appropriately. The Audit Committee has therefore been kept appraised of the development of this new approach and the 12 Governance Assurance Area (GAA) reports that form the Council's Governance Assurance Register have been reviewed by the Audit Committee at their meetings on 19 May and 23 June 2026.

2.8 Service Committees, in contrast, now have a different function under these arrangements. The Council's Governance Assurance Framework outlines how under the new arrangements relevant Service Committees have a key role in considering and scrutinising the areas of focus, concerns and issues within their remit with individual senior managers invited to attend to discuss their assurance areas, specific matters and key risks in their services.

2.9 Of the 12 GAAs within the Register, 9 come under the CPRC's remit:

(a) Ensuring the Council has robust mechanisms in place to prepare for, respond to and recover from civil emergencies and business interruptions

(b) Ensuring and maintaining our Organisational Resilience.

(c) Ensuring we meet our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) duties and responsibilities.

(d) Ensuring our programme and change management arrangements are effective to support the successful transition to the new unitary council.

(e) Ensuring the Council's financial management and long-term planning arrangements are effective to secure financial sustainability.

(f) Ensuring there are effective governance arrangements in place to deliver the IRP.

(g) Ensuring effective Procurement and Contract Management arrangements.

(h) Ensuring our arrangements against the threat of fraud and maintaining assurance that our anti-fraud arrangements are robust and effective.

(i) Ensuring our arrangements to for Cyber Resilience and manage the threat of a cyber-attack are effective.

2.10 In order to introduce this Committee to the new reporting mechanism for GAAs, an update will be provided relating to one area at this meeting, i.e.:

- Ensuring the Council's financial management and long-term planning arrangements are effective to secure financial sustainability.

A summary of progress with the actions outlined in the GAA is shown in **Appendix B**. This update coincides with the presentation of a number of financial reports to the Committee.

2.11 Following discussions at the Audit Committee a suggested timetable for updates to Service Committees is under review to ensure that sufficient time is available for CPRC to properly consider and discuss the other GAAs under its remit, whilst also dealing with other scheduled reports.

2.12 In view of the ongoing work programme outlined in the Forward Plan for CPRC, it is proposed to provide a limited number of updates for each Committee cycle focusing first on key priority areas for the Council. For the next Committee meeting it is therefore proposed to cover:

(a) Ensuring and maintaining our Organisational Resilience.

(b) Ensuring our programme and change management arrangements are effective to support the successful transition to the new unitary council.

The Committee is asked to consider whether any additional/alternative areas listed in paragraph 2.9 should be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

## 3. Options appraisal and proposal

3.1 **Option 1 (preferred option)** Committee is asked to:

(a) Note progress with the ongoing implementation of the Council's Governance Assurance Framework and Policy.

(b) Note the current overall assurance level for the 12 Governance Assurance Areas (**Appendix A**), which forms the new Governance Assurance Register.

(c) Consider the key areas of focus, concerns and issues concerning the Governance Assurance Area relating to Financial Management as outlined in **Appendix B** of this report.

(d) Consider the next Governance Assurance Reports to be presented to the Committee at future meetings, as outlined in paragraph 2.12.

3.2 **Option 2** – The Committee could propose an alternative approach.

## 4. Governance and risk considerations

4.1 The Council's Governance Assurance Register outlines the authority's governance arrangements in place to provide assurance that key corporate and strategic risks impacting the authority are effectively managed. The change to a governance assurance approach through a new Framework and Policy together with training and monitoring will ensure that effective governance is embedded within the culture of the organisation.

## 5. Financial implications

5.1 The development and implementation of the new Governance Assurance Framework and the Governance Assurance Register can be delivered within existing resources. Any minor costs relating to ongoing staff training, development of supporting documentation, and updates to reporting systems will be met from current service budgets. Over time, strengthening the Council's governance assurance arrangements is expected to support more effective financial planning and help mitigate the likelihood of unanticipated financial pressures arising from weakness or failures in governance.

## 6. Legal comments

6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

## Corporate implications

## 7. Commissioners' comments

7.1 To be confirmed.

## 8. S151 Officer comments

8.1 The S151 Officer recognises that having effective assurance arrangements to support the delivery of organisational objectives is key to ensure good value for money. One of the assurance areas to be scrutinised at this meeting relates to Financial Management arrangements.

## 9. Monitoring Officer comments

9.1 The Monitoring Officer reiterates s.151 Officer's comments in para 8.1 of this report and notes that risk management is within the remit of this Committee (Part 3 section (b) of the Constitution).

## 10. Procurement comments

10.1 There are no procurement implications arising directly from this report.

## 11. Equality and Diversity

11.1 The revised Governance Assurance Register incorporates a specific Governance Assurance Area specifying how the Council ensures the effective discharge of the Council's responsibilities and duties relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

## 12. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

12.1 The revised Governance Assurance approach incorporates a specific Governance Assurance Area covering how the Council discharges its responsibilities with respect to its zero carbon targets and wider environmental responsibilities.

## 13. Other considerations

13.1 As with adopting and embedding the governance assurance approach for the Audit Committee, it will inevitably take some time to fully integrate the new processes across all Committees. An audit of progress and compliance with the new Governance Assurance arrangements will be undertaken by the Council's external Governance Assurance/Risk Management advisor by the end of August 2026.

## 14. Timetable for implementation

14.1 The proposed timetable outlining the dates for future updates to CPRC is under review and may be subject to change to ensure sufficient time is available for discussion of the GAAs, together with other reports on the agenda.

## 15. Contact

15.1 Lee O'Neil – Deputy Chief Executive (l.o'neil@spelthorne.gov.uk)

15.2 Rob Winter *(robwinter.argc@gmail.com)*

***Please submit any material questions to the Committee Chair and Officer Contact by two days in advance of the meeting.***

**Background papers:** *Governance Assurance Register (one GAA confidential)*

**Appendices:**

**Appendix A:** Table outlining the overall assurance level for the 12 Governance Assurance Areas making up the Council's Governance Assurance Register.

**Appendix B:** Governance Assurance update for CPRC relating to Financial Management.