

Audit & Governance Committee

Date of Meeting: 30 July 2020

Report Title: Committee Work Plan

Senior Officer: Jane Burns, Executive Director Corporate Services

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report presents the Committee Work Plan for 2020/21 (Appendix A) to the Committee for consideration and update.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Committee:
 - 2.1.1. Consider the Work Plan and determine any required amendments;
 - 2.1.2. Note that the plan will be brought back to the Committee throughout the year for further development and approval.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The Audit and Governance Committee has a key role in overseeing and assessing the Council's risk management, control and corporate governance arrangements. It advises the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements. A forward-looking programme of meetings and agenda items is necessary to enable the Committee to fulfil its responsibilities.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Not applicable

5. Background

- 5.1. Aspects of the Audit and Governance Committee's agenda are determined by statutory requirements such as the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement. Outside these agenda items, the Committee should aim to manage its agenda according to its assurance needs to fulfil

its terms of reference. The Committee is asked to consider the contents of the Work Plan (Appendix A) and establish any amendments that will enable it to meet its responsibilities.

- 5.2. By identifying the key topics to be considered at the Audit and Governance Committee meetings, and receiving appropriate reports, Committee Members are able to undertake their duties effectively and deliver them to a high standard. In turn, this adds to the robustness of the risk management framework, the adequacy of the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and corporate governance of the Council.
- 5.3. Members will recognise that some items are brought to Committee on a more regular basis than others and ensure that statutory requirements are complied with. There are also individual requirements of the Committee's Terms of Reference which are only used on an ad-hoc basis. The Work Plan will be re-submitted to the Committee for further development and approval at each subsequent meeting.
- 5.4. In order to help with their deliberations, Members are asked to consider the following:
 - 5.4.1. Care should be taken to avoid duplication and maintain the focus of an audit committee on its core functions as defined by its terms of reference rather than wider issues that are subject to the work of other committees or assurance functions.
 - 5.4.2. That the Audit and Governance Committee should operate at a strategic level with matters of operational detail resolved by service managers.
 - 5.4.3. The number and frequency of reports should be proportional to the risk in order to give the core business of an audit committee sufficient focus and attention and to avoid lengthy and thus unproductive meetings.
- 5.5. Changes to the Work Plan since the May 2020 meeting of the Committee are as follows:
 - 5.5.1. The Whistleblowing item scheduled for July 2020 has been incorporated into the Monitoring Officer Annual Report which is presented at the same meeting.
 - 5.5.2. The Risk Management item scheduled for July 2020 has been deferred to the September 2020 meeting.
 - 5.5.3. Additional items has been added to the July 2020 meeting relating to Member Dispensations and the Community Governance Review.

- 5.5.4. The review of the Council's Standards arrangements scheduled for September 2020 has been deferred. This is to allow for the publication of the final model Standards Code, now expected in the Autumn and the appointment of a new Monitoring Officer.
- 5.6. On 24 June 2020, CIPFA hosted a webinar "Update for Local Authority Audit Committee Members" which provided information relating to the impacts of covid-19 on matters such as the accounts timetable, auditing arrangements and the Annual Governance Statement. The webinar was attended by three members of the Committee and the slides have been shared with the Committee.
- 5.7. In response to the webinar, the Chair and Vice chair will undertake a review of training requirements with officers which will be included in the Committee's training plan.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

- 6.1.1. The Work Plan for 2020/21 complies with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

6.2. Finance Implications

- 6.2.1. When reviewing the Work Plan, Members will need to consider the resource implications of any reviews they wish to carry out both in terms of direct costs and in terms of the required officer support.

6.3. Policy Implications

- 6.3.1. There are no policy implications in this report.

6.4. Equality Implications

- 6.4.1. There are no direct implications for equality in this report. The Audit and Governance Committee receives assurances from across the organisation.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

- 6.5.1. Members should be satisfied that the inclusion of each item on its agenda results in added value, as the assurance process has a resource implication to the organisation and should therefore be proportional to the risk.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.6.1. Effective internal control and the establishment of an audit committee can never eliminate the risks of serious fraud, misconduct or misrepresentation of the financial position.

However, an effective audit committee can:

- 6.6.1.1. raise awareness of the need for robust risk management, control and corporate governance arrangements and the implementation of audit recommendations,
- 6.6.1.2. increase public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting
- 6.6.1.3. reinforce the importance and independence of internal and external audit and any other similar review process
- 6.6.1.4. provide additional assurance through a process of independent and objective review

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

- 6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

- 6.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

6.9. Public Health Implications

- 6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

- 6.10.1. There are no climate change implications in this report.

7. Ward Members Affected

- 7.1. All wards affected.

8. Consultation & Engagement

- 8.1. The Work Plan is prepared following discussion with key officers who regularly provide updates to the Audit and Governance Committee. The Work Plan is discussed with the Committee Chair and Vice Chair

9. Access to Information

- 9.1. Not applicable.

10. Contact Information

- 10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officers:

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