

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Audit and Governance Committee

Date: 14 March 2022

Report of: Monitoring Officer

Subject: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

SUMMARY

This report summarises the work carried out by the Audit and Governance Committee during 2021/22 and proposes the programme of work for 2022/23.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Audit and Governance Committee: -

- a) notes the contents of the report;
- b) confirms that there are no issues arising from the review of the Statement of Accounts and subsequent external audit report, at the same meeting, that the Committee feel need to be brought to the attention of the Council; and
- c) submits the revised work programme for 2022/23, as shown in [Appendix C](#), to Council for endorsement.

INTRODUCTION

1. This annual report summarises how this Committee has performed during 2021/22 in relation to the purpose and functions set out in the constitution. It should be noted that 2021/22 was the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic but this had limited impact on the operation of the Committee in the year.

COMMITTEE ORGANISATION 2021/22

2. The Committee continued to operate this year in accordance with best practice as detailed in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) publication "Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities". One exception is that the Vice-chairman is also an Executive member. This was reviewed during a previous audit of the Audit Committee arrangements and was not considered a significant problem due to: a) the difference between the decision-making and governance roles is well understood and, b) the chairman of the Committee is not also the chairman of the Executive or any Scrutiny Panels.
3. The Committee was comprised of seven members who reflect the political balance of the Council. The Committee had a new Chairman for the year who had previously served on the Audit and Governance Committee for a number of years; there were also two other changes in membership of the Committee.
4. The Committee was supported in its work by the Monitoring Officer, with the Deputy Chief Executive Officer / Section 151 Officer also in attendance at every meeting. The Committee reported directly to the Council.
5. The Committee met four times in the year. All meetings were held in person, with the first meeting of the year being held under enhanced social distancing measures. At the meeting of 22 November 2021 a serving Committee member was appointed to chair the meeting as both the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman were unable to attend.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY IN 2021/22

6. The work being carried out by the Committee to fulfil its responsibilities is reported as a work programme to each Committee and is summarised in [Appendix A](#). The full list of the functions of the Committee is given in [Appendix B](#).
7. The following points should be noted:
 - (a) The Committee was not requested to review any issues by the Chief Executive Officer, any director or Council body during the year.
 - (b) There were no issues arising from the review of the Statement of Accounts and subsequent external audit report that the Committee felt needed to be brought to the attention of the Council (to be confirmed during the meeting).
 - (c) There were no requests from the Committee for further information to be provided.

8. The majority of the reports contained in the work programme approved at the March 2021 meeting have been presented to the Committee, at some point in the year. There was one additional piece of work carried out by the Committee in addition to the original work programme, which covered the Arrangements for the Appointment of the next External Auditors.
9. The table below shows the reports missed and the proposals on how to address the work missed:

Original Meeting Scheduled	Subject	Proposal
March 2022	Internal Audit Annual Plan	Team to work to a provisional quarter 1 plan with full plan to be presented at the July 2022 meeting.
March 2022	External Audit Annual Plan	An outline plan to be prepared with a potential presentation at the July 2022 meeting if the full plan is not finalised by then.
March 2022	Annual Auditor's Report and Value for Money commentary	This work is nearly complete and should be presented to the July 2022 meeting.
November 2021	Anti-Bribery Policy	This work has been postponed to the 2022/23 internal audit plan with the provisional aim to be complete for the November 2022 meeting.
November 2021	Annual Review of the Constitution	The review is in progress which is covering all 9 parts of Part 5 of the Constitution. The conclusions will be brought to the Committee later in the year when the work has been completed. Provisional aim for the November 2022 meeting.
March 2022 (extra item)	Review of Members Complaints Procedures	The review is in progress. The conclusions are to be included in the Constitution Report above.

TRAINING EVENTS

10. There were no specific training events for the Members of the Committee during 2021/22. However, the full programme of planned and delivered training for members is being presented as a separate report to the March Committee.

WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

11. The proposed work plan for the Committee for 2022/23 is attached as [Appendix C](#). The following items are in the programme for cyclical review this year in addition to the annual items:
 - Review of the Anti-Bribery Policy
 - Review of the Counter Fraud Policy and Strategy

- Review of the Financial Regulations
- Update on the arrangements for the Appointment of the next External Auditors

RISK ASSESSMENT

12. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

CONCLUSION

13. The work programme in place is appropriate to meet the responsibilities of the Committee.

Appendices:

[Appendix A](#) – Work carried out in 2021/22 in support of the functions of the Committee

[Appendix B](#) – Functions of the Audit and Governance Committee as set out in the constitution

[Appendix C](#) – Proposed Work Programme for 2022/23

Background Papers: None

Reference Papers: Minutes of and reports to Audit and Governance Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22

CIPFA Publication – Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2018)

The Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2021

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Elaine Hammell. (Ext. 4344)

APPENDIX A

Work carried out in 2021/22 in support of the Functions of the Committee

Function	Work Completed
Overall Purpose and Accountability	Regular reviews of the work programme Annual Report of the Committee for 2020/21
Corporate Governance and Annual Governance Statement	Review of Annual Governance Statement 2020/21
Risk Management and Internal Control	Risk Management Monitoring Reports (November and March)
Value for Money	<i>No work completed</i>
Counter Fraud	Counter Fraud Annual Report 2020/21
Partnerships	Partnership Governance Report 2020/21
Internal Audit	Internal Audit Annual Plan 2020/21 Head of Audit's Annual Opinion Report 2020/21 Regular Internal Audit Progress Reports
External Audit	Annual Certification Report 2020/21 External Audit Annual Plan and Fee 2020/21 Arrangements for Appointment of next External Auditors
Financial Reporting	Review of the Statement of Accounts 2020/21 (unaudited) External Audit – Audit Results Report 2020/21
Standards and Ethics	Annual Ombudsman Reports and Overview of Complaints against members Review of Members Training and Development Programme
Treasury Management	Treasury Management Progress Report 2020/21 Treasury Management Strategy and Indicators 2021/22
Key Policy Review	Prevention of the Facilitation of Tax Evasion Review of the New Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules
Considering Other Matters Referred to the Committee	Results of Inspection carried out by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office Extension to the Internal Audit partnership contract with Portsmouth City Council

APPENDIX B

Part 2 Chapter 8 of the Constitution - Functions of the Audit and Governance Committee

OVERALL PURPOSE

The Audit and Governance committee is a key component of Fareham Borough Council's corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

The purpose of our audit committee is to:

Provide independent assurance to those charged with governance (the Full Council) of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment.

Provide independent review of Fareham Borough Council's governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversee the financial reporting and annual governance processes.

Oversee internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Audit and Governance Committee should report to those charged with governance (the Full Council) on the committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, financial reporting arrangements, and internal and external audit functions.

The Audit and Governance Committee should publish an annual report on the work of the committee including details of coverage against the purposes of the Committee.

GOVERNANCE, RISK AND CONTROL

Corporate Governance

The Audit and Governance Committee's areas of responsibility for Corporate Governance are: -

- a) To review the Council's arrangements for corporate governance, against the good governance framework, including the ethical framework, and consider the local code of governance.
- b) To consider the council's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the council.

Annual Governance Statement

To review the Council's Annual Governance Statement, prior to approval, and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, taking into account internal audit's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control.

Risk Management and Internal Control

The Audit and Governance Committee's areas of responsibility for Risk Management and Internal Control are:

- a) To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the Council.
- b) To monitor progress in addressing risk-related issues reported to committee.

- c) To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.

Value for Money

To consider the council's arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.

Counter Fraud

The Audit and Governance Committee's areas of responsibility for counter fraud are: -

- a) To review the policies and measures in place to prevent fraud and corruption.
- b) To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the council from fraud and corruption.
- c) To monitor the counter-fraud strategy, actions and resources.

Partnerships

The Audit and Governance Committee's areas of responsibility for partnerships are to review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations.

AUDIT

Internal Audit

The Audit and Governance Committee's areas of responsibility for Internal Audit are:-

- a) To approve the internal audit charter.
- b) To review proposals made in relation to the appointment of external providers of internal audit services and to make recommendations.
- c) To approve the risk-based internal audit plan, including internal audit's resource requirements and the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.
- d) To approve significant interim changes to internal audit plan and resource requirements.
- e) To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the head of internal audit to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.
- f) To consider any impairments to independence or objectivity arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing of the head of internal audit. To approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments.
- g) To consider reports from the head of internal audit on internal audit's performance, including the performance of external providers of internal audit services. These will include:
 - updates on the work of internal audit including key findings, issues of concern and action in hand as a result of internal audit work.
 - Reports on the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan (QAIP)
 - conformance to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards considering whether the non-conformance is significant enough that it must be included in the Annual Governance Statement, and whether this affects the reliability of the conclusions of internal audit.
- h) To consider the head of internal audit's annual report and opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion.
- i) To receive reports outlining the action taken where the head of internal audit has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions.
- j) To provide free and unfettered access to the audit committee chair for the head of internal audit, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the committee.

External Audit

The Audit and Governance Committee's areas of responsibility for External Audit are:-

- a) To support the independence of external audit through consideration of the external auditor's annual assessment of its independence and review of any issues raised by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA).
- b) To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.
- c) To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance (the Full Council).
- d) To advise and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between external and internal audit and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies

FINANCIAL REPORTING

The Audit and Governance Committee's areas of responsibility for the Council's Financial Reporting are:

- a) To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council.
- b) To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance (the Full Council) on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

WIDER FUNCTIONS OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for carrying out wider functions for the Council in relation to:

- a) Standards and ethics
- b) Treasury management
- c) Key policy review
- d) Considering other matters

Standards and Ethics

The Audit and Governance Committee's purpose is also to:

- a) To lead on the Council's duties under Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 and to design, implement, monitor, approve and review the standards of ethics and probity of the Council both for councillors and employees; and
- b) To promote, maintain and strengthen high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the Council.

The Audit and Governance Committee's areas of responsibility for Standards and Ethics are:-

- a) Advise on an internal framework of probity and standards of conduct that should be followed by members and officers.
- b) Formulate, monitor and revise, as necessary, Local Codes of Conduct for members and officers.
- c) Formulate, monitor and revise, as necessary, a protocol for member/officer relationships.
- d) Issue guidance and best practice advice with regard to probity and ethics including the following:
 - the declaration and registration of members' interests
 - claims for members' allowances and expenses
 - acceptance of, or dealing with, offers of hospitality and gifts made by third parties
 - the provision to members of hospitality, goods, services and facilities by the Council
 - the undertaking of travel and foreign visits.

- e) Advise on such other matters of a similar kind that may be referred to the Committee.
- f) Issue advice and guidance to members representing the Council on outside bodies.
- g) Receive, consider and, where necessary, act on reports, guidance and advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer and the Local Government Ombudsman.
- h) Provide appropriate training for members and officers with regard to any of the above and the ethical governance of the Council generally.
- i) Appoint such sub-committees, panels or working parties as are deemed appropriate to undertake specific parts of these Terms of Reference.
- j) Consider complaints against members' conduct and assess allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members to determine such complaints.
- k) Monitor and review members' training and development.
- l) To establish a Standards Sub-Committee to investigate and determine appropriate actions in respect of alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Treasury Management

The Council nominates the Audit and Governance Committee to be responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the implementation of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and Policy.

Key Policy Review

The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for reviewing and making recommendations to Council on its Constitution including Financial Regulations and Procurement and Contract Rules.

In carrying out this work the committee should advocate the principles of good governance and help ensure that there are appropriate governance, risk, control and assurance arrangements in place.

Considering Other Matters Referred to the Committee

Occasionally the Audit and Governance Committee may be requested to review an issue referred to it by another committee or a statutory officer.

APPENDIX C

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23

Committee Function and Report Subject		Frequency	Last Covered	July 2022	Sept 2022	Nov 2022	March 2023
OVERALL PURPOSE AND ACCOUNTABILITY							
Review of Work Programme and training plan		Quarterly	2021-22	YES	YES	YES	YES, and Annual Report for 2021/22
Review of the Functions of the Committee		3 yearly	2019-20		YES		
GOVERNANCE, RISK AND CONTROL							
Corporate Governance & AGS	Local Code of Corporate Governance	As needed	2016-17				
	Annual Governance Statement	Annual	2021-22	YES			
Risk Management	Policy	As needed	2016-17				
	Risk Management Monitoring Reports	6 monthly	2021-22		YES		YES
	Business Continuity	3 yearly	2018-19			YES	
	Specific Risk Management topics	As needed	2019-20 (cyber security risks)				
Value for Money	Specific VFM studies	As needed	None				
Counter Fraud	Counter Fraud Policy and Strategy	3 yearly	2016-17			YES	
	Anti-Bribery Policy	As needed	2011-12			YES	
	Sanctions and Redress Policy	As needed	2016-17				
	Counter Fraud Annual Report	Annually	2021-22	YES			
Partnerships	Partnership Governance Report	Annually	2021-22		YES		
AUDIT							
Internal Audit	Internal Audit Strategy	3 yearly	2018-19				
	Internal Audit Annual Plan	Annual	2021-22	YES (from March)			YES
	Internal Audit Progress Report	Quarterly	2021-22	YES	YES	YES	YES

Committee Function and Report Subject		Frequency	Last Covered	July 2022	Sept 2022	Nov 2022	March 2023
	Head of Audit's Annual Opinion	Annual	2021-22	YES			
External Audit	Arrangements for Appointment of External Auditors	As needed	2021-22		YES		
	Annual Plan and Fee	Annual	2020-21	YES			YES
	Annual Auditor's Report and VFM commentary	Annual	2020-21	YES			
	Annual Certification Report	Annual	2021-22				YES
	Specific reports from inspection agencies	As needed	2018-19 (RIPA)				
FINANCIAL REPORTING							
Statement of Accounts		Annual	2021-22	YES			
External Audit – Audit Results Report		Annual	2021-22		YES		
WIDER FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE							
Standards and Ethics	Review of Code of Conduct for Members	As needed	2015-16				
	Review of member / officer protocol	As needed	2008-09				
	Annual Ombudsman Reports and Overview of Complaints against members	Annual	2021-22		YES		
	Review of Members Training and Development Programme	Annual	2021-22				YES
Treasury Management	Treasury Management Strategy and Indicators	Annual	2021-22			YES	YES - Policy and indicators
Key Policy Review	Annual Review of the Constitution	Annual	2020-21			YES	
	Review of Financial Regulations	3 yearly	2019-20				YES
	Review of Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules	3 yearly	2021-22				
	Prevention of the Facilitation of Tax Evasion	As needed	2021-22				
Other Matters referred to the Committee	Updates on legal issues	As needed	2017-18				
	Issues referred by the Chief Executive Officer, Directors and Other Council Bodies	As needed	None				
Number of Items				9	8	7	9