

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Audit and Governance Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY on Wednesday, 11 December 2024 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor P Harris (Chair)
Councillor S Forde (Vice-Chair)

Councillor P Farmer, Councillor A Freeman, Councillor J Hall, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor S Michael and Councillor T Thompson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor R Cozens, Councillor S Haynes, Councillor C Penny and Councillor M Shakeshaft and Mr C Richardson (Non-Voting Co-Optee)

112 NOTIFICATION TO THOSE PRESENT THAT THE MEETING WILL BE RECORDED AND STREAMED ONLINE

Other than the Council recording in accordance with usual practice, there were no declarations of intention to record the meeting.

113 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

That no Member or Officer declared any interest pursuant to any statutory requirement in any matter discussed or voted upon at the meeting.

114 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2024

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

115 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2024/25

The Committee considered the report from Philip Lazenby, Director of Audit (TIAA) providing a summary of Internal Audit work undertaken during 2024/25 against the agreed audit plan.

The report provided details of all reports issued within the first part of the financial year 2024/25, with an additional 4 audit reports completed since the last Committee.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Members considered and commented upon the latest internal audit progress report and noted its content.

116 EXTERNAL AUDITORS AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Financial Services presenting the External Auditor's Progress Report for Newark and Sherwood District Council for 2023/24.

The representative from Mazars, Mark Surridge, present at the meeting had provided the report at Appendix A.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) Members received and noted the External Auditors Audit Progress Report for 2023/24; and
- b) Members noted the adjustments to the draft audited financial statements set out in the report.

117 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Financial Services informing Members of the activity undertaken by the Audit and Governance Committee between 27 September 2023 and 31 July 2024.

The report provided a summary of the activities, to then be taken to February's Full Council.

AGREED (unanimously) that Members noted the report.

118 PROJECTED GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2025 AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Financial Services updating Members with the forecast outturn position for the 2024/25 financial year for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets. The report showing performance against the approved estimates of revenue expenditure and income.

The report was provided to Members as a slimdown version as it had already been to Cabinet.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the Committee noted the General Fund projected favourable outturn variance of £0.719m;
- b) the Committee noted the Housing Revenue Account projected favourable outturn variance of £0.33m to the Major Repairs Reserve;
- c) the Committee noted the Capital Programme revised budget and financing of £49.67m; and
- d) the Committee noted the Prudential indicators at Appendix A.

119 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2024/25

The Committee considered the report from the Assistant Business Manager for Financial Services to provide an update on the Council's Treasury Activity and Prudential Indicators for the first half of 2024/25.

The report advised no breach to indicators and to expect interest rate levels to go down.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the Treasury Management activity be noted and recommended to Full Council on 17 December 2024; and
- b) the Prudential Indicators detailed in Section 6 & 7 of the report be noted.

120 OUTCOME OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN INVESTIGATION

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Customer Services to inform Members of the outcome of an investigation where the Ombudsman found fault with the Council.

A resident had complained to the Ombudsman that the Council was slow to act in respect of statutory noise nuisance. This was regarding noise levels at a licensed premises in Newark.

The Ombudsman found the Council at fault and made recommendations to remedy the injustice caused by the faults identified, of which these recommendations have been accepted and implemented.

AGREED (unanimously) that Members noted the report and the lessons learnt.

121 OUTCOME OF HOUSING OMBUDSMAN INVESTIGATION

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Customer Services to inform Members of the outcome of an investigation where the Ombudsman found fault with the Council.

A resident had complained to the Housing Ombudsman regarding various issues relating to the Council's handling of repairs and requests for adaptations to their property.

The Housing Ombudsman determined there to be maladministration in one area and service failure in three, several recommendations were made and the orders and recommendations have been accepted and implemented.

AGREED (unanimously) that Members noted the report and the lessons learnt.

122 HOUSING OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW UPDATE

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Customer Services to inform Members of the publication of the Housing Ombudsman Annual Review Report 2023-24.

The report confirmed that as the Council had not had five or more cases determined by the Housing Ombudsman during the period April 2023 to March 2024, there was

not an individual report for Newark and Sherwood District Council however, it was important that members were aware of the publication.

Any cases that do come up are taken to both Policy & Performance Improvement Committee and Audit & Governance Committee.

AGREED (unanimously) that Members noted the report and the role of the Housing Ombudsman Service in dispute resolution and effective complaint handling.

123 STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered the report from the Safety and Risk Manager providing an overview of the Council's current 2024/25 strategic risk register allowing Members to review strategic risk management arrangements.

The report advised that the contents of the Strategic Risk Register were reported to Members in April 2024 and that the contents of the current risk register has not changed since this last report and continues to have 9 strategic risks.

A table in the report provided the contents of the 2024/25 risk register, as agreed by SLT. An update report will be brought to the Audit & Governance Committee in 6 months.

AGREED (unanimously) that Members noted the content of the report and highlighted any issues of concern relating to the Strategic Risk Register.

124 UPDATE ON THE LGA NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL CYBER 360 REPORT

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for ICT & Digital Services providing the updated results of LGA Newark and Sherwood District Council Cyber 360 Report.

The report advised that the Corporate Information Governance Group (CIGG) continue to progress the review of the Cyber 360 action plan which is 75% complete, updating elected Members.

AGREED (unanimously) that Members reviewed, commented upon and noted the update on the LGA Newark and Sherwood District Council Cyber 360 Report.

125 GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION - ENABLING REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING AT LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS

The Committee report from the Business Manager for Elections and Democratic Services was to consider a formal Council response to the government consultation on remote attendance at meetings and proxy voting.

The report to submit a formal Council response to the Government consultation given its potential impact on governance arrangements.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Audit & Governance Committee considered the draft response to the Government consultation, as set out in Appendix A to the report.

126 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

The Committee considered the report from the Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer providing an update on progress with a review of the Constitution following the Committee's first informal workshop.

The informal workshop was held on 17 October 2024, with 7 Committee Members in attendance. Officers from Legal & Democratic Services presented issues and updates for Members to consider in relation to the following:

- Petitions Scheme
- Motions
- Annual Budget Meeting arrangements
- Licensing and General Purposes Committee
- Contract Procedure Rules
- Acquisitions and Disposals Policy
- Local Code on Corporate Governance
- Some miscellaneous amendments

They agreed an additional meeting was required as not possible to complete the discussion in the time allotted and this to be arranged in the New Year.

The Annual Budget meeting arrangements would however be considered for recommendation to Full Council in February.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) progress be noted; and
- b) revisions to the arrangements for the Annual Budget meeting are presented to Full Council for adoption.

127 REVIEW OF POLICIES - ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY, GUIDANCE FOR DEALING WITH IRREGULARITIES AND ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING POLICY

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Financial Services presenting the following updated policies – Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Guidance for Dealing with Irregularities and Anti-Money Laundering Policy.

The revised documents had no substantive changes proposed, with any updates shown as tracked changes for ease of reference.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Committee approved the revised policies attached at Appendices A, B and C to the report.

128 CONDUCT AND PUBLIC SERVICE

The Committee received the report from the Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer to consider implementation of the Full Council resolution 'Conduct and Public Service' made on 15 October 2024.

Following this Committee meeting, arrangements to be put in place for Committee Members to attend an informal workshop.

AGREED (unanimously) that: the Members of Audit & Governance Committee consider at an informal workshop and that proposals are presented at the earliest opportunity to Committee for formal consideration: -

1. Whether to align the Council's Code of Conduct exactly with the Local Government Association Model Code
2. Whether the Council can adopt any recommendations or good practice from the Local Government Association's Civility in Public Life report and Debate not Hate Campaign
3. Review and Update the Council's Social Media Protocol for Members, taking into account Local Government Association guidance

129 ANNUAL REPORT DETAILING EXEMPT REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Committee report from the Business Manager for Elections and Democratic Services to consider the list of exempt business considered by Audit & Governance Committee for the period 27 September 2023 to date, and which if any, reports could be released into the public domain.

AGREED (unanimously) that Members noted the report and for all exempt business to remain confidential as advised by report authors.

130 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Committee considered the joint report of the Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services, Monitoring Officer and the Business Manager for Financial Services which attached the Committee's Work Plan for consideration.

The Committee noted to include the Statement of Accounts to the February Agenda as part of the Work Plan.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Work Plan be noted.

131 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

AGREED (unanimously) that under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

132 UPDATE ON THE LGA NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL CYBER 360 ACTION PLAN

The Committee considered the exempt report from the Business Manager for ICT & Digital Services providing an update on the LGA Newark and Sherwood District Council Cyber 360 Action Plan.

133 DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 19 FEBRUARY 2025

134 REQUEST MEETING DATE CHANGE FROM 23 APRIL 2025 TO PREVIOUS WEEK ON 16 APRIL 2025 DUE TO ROOM USAGE FOR ELECTIONS

The Committee considered the request to change the meeting date for the April 2025 Audit and Governance Committee from 23 April to the previous week on 16 April due to room usage for Elections.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Audit & Governance Committee to meet on 16 April, to allow the room usage for Elections.

Meeting closed at 7.45 pm.

Chair