

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2023

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 10:00

Present

A Bagley – Chairperson (lay member)

S J Bletsoe
A Williams

C Davies
M Williams

RM Granville

SJ Griffiths

M Hughes

Lay Members:

B Olorunnisola

Apologies for Absence

Mr G Chapman

Officers:

Mark Shephard
Carys Lord
Kelly Watson
Deborah Exton
Nigel Smith
Anthony Veale
Sara-Jane Byrne
Andrew Wathan
Kate Pask
Stephen Griffiths
Oscar Roberts

Chief Executive
Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change
Chief Officer Legal and Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy
Deputy Head of Finance
Group Manager - Chief Accountant
Audit Wales (external)
Audit Wales (external)
Head of the Regional Internal Audit Service
Corporate Improvement Officer - Performance
Democratic Services Officer – Committees
Business Administrative Apprentice – Democratic Services

Declarations of Interest

None

112. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> The Minutes of the meeting on 28 September 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	9 November 2023

113. Governance and Audit Committee Action Record

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> The Committee noted the Action Record and provided comments on a number of issues, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The newly established Capital Board, especially its role and purpose and reporting arrangements. It was noted that its key role was to act as an early warning system. The Chairperson asked that an action be recorded for the Committee to receive assurance, at some point, that the Board is working as intended.• School Vehicles and the concerns raised by Members at the last meeting. The concerns were raised with the Corporate Management Board (CMB), and the Director of Education wrote to all schools about the matter. A Member requested that the content of the letter be shared with Members. The Head of the Regional Internal Audit Service undertook to do this.• Outstanding Recommendations. That these have been taken to CMB and a report on the outcomes from that will be submitted to the Committee in January.
Date Decision Made	9 November 2023

114. Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports at Appendix A and Appendix B.</p> <p>Members discussed a number of issues in response to the Audit Wales reports, including the issue of fees, changes in auditing standards, and evaluating value from the audit process.</p>
Date Decision Made	9 November 2023

115. Half Year Review of Annual Governance Statement

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee considered the Annual Governance Statement 2023-24 Action Plan and progress on the actions to 30 September 2023.</p> <p>Members raised a number of issues in response to this report, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inflation. It was noted that pay, fuel, and issues in respect of supply chains had a particular impact on local government budgets.• The value of Self-assessment.• Disabled Facilities Grants. Members received confirmation the report on this would come to the Committee's next meeting in January 2024. It was noted that applications were being processed and that no one was on hold waiting for the new framework to be up and running.• De-carbonisation and allocated funding.• The need for some additional clarity in how the Council has responded to some recommendations in Audit Wales reports, especially in respect of, for example, Strategic Asset Management.• The need for context in the report in respect of the qualified audit assurance opinion on Housing Benefit, and for more detail about the Council's response in respect of governance and risk management.
Date Decision Made	9 November 2023

116. Treasury Management Half Year Report 2023-24

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Governance and Audit Committee noted the treasury management activities for 2023-24 for the half year period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 and the projected Treasury Management Indicators for 2023-24.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members discussed a range of issues, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Money market funds and their value as part of the Treasury management strategy.• Trends in respect of net debt and the balance of investments.• The liability benchmark, especially its value as a tool.• The Council's capital finance requirements, especially in 2025-26 and beyond.• The complex and technical nature of treasury management reports and the importance of monitoring developments in this area of activity.
Date Decision Made	9 November 2023

117. Self-Assessment - 2022/23

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee considered and approved the changes to the corporate self-assessment report 2022/23 at Appendix 1.</p> <p>In considering the report, Members raised a number of issues, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The need to move away from a largely anecdotal approach to one based on a representative sample of the population. The need to use statistical methods to come to a fuller picture of opinion in the County Borough.• The prioritisation of services and the extent to which these are supported locally.• The value of benchmarking.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That transport is not considered in the report, and the Local Transport Strategy hadn't been updated since 2015. It was noted that Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 (SOSC3) would be the appropriate committee to explore this issue further. Three actions were identified:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A Member requested that the Chair of SOSC3 be contacted to request that the issue be explored.▪ The Chief Executive made a commitment to explore the issue in preparation for the next self-assessment report.▪ A Member requested a written response from the Chief Executive on progress against the 2015 plan.• The importance of communicating the good things and being advocates for what we do.• That although the framework was in its infancy it was a good start and would take the Council forward.
Date Decision Made	9 November 2023

118. Monitoring Report - Corporate Complaints

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the report and determined whether it wished to make any recommendations in relation to the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members discussed a number of issues, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal Complaints (Stage 2) and the root cause analysis for why not all were responded to within 5 days. That the team responsible for complaints would use its best endeavours to ensure that that there is a 100% response with 5 days.• As outlined in the Annual Letter from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), the number of complaints against the Authority for the period 2022-23 was 55 compared with 55 in 2021-22 and 31 in 2020-21. The figure for 2022-23 represents 0.38 complaints received per 1000 residents.• The need to put in place a process to regularly review the Vexatious Complaints Policy.• The value of having a standardised imprint on policy documents to summarise review processes.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That Councillors could need additional guidance on handling potentially challenging situations involving constituents in respect of the complaints process.• The need to ensure lessons are learnt from complaints to improve services. A commitment was made by the Chief Officer Legal and Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy to share the analysis of outcomes from the complaints process with Members.• The need to draw together all the sources of complaints into a common process. A project is underway led by the Customer Services Team to explore this issue.• In terms of formal complaints received by each Directorate, most were concentrated in Communities. The reasons for this were probably complex but the key reason could be the public-facing nature of most of their services.• There was a need to ensure the complaints process was working as it should be and that the Regional Internal Audit Service (RIAS) would <u>consider building</u> a review into its work programme for 2024-25.•
Date Decision Made	9 November 2023

119. Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee approved the Governance and Audit Committee's Annual Report 2022/23 and its presentation to full Council.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members discussed a number of issues, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That though the Committee had its full quota of members for the period covered by the annual report, a lay member had resigned in the current year and the recruitment process to appoint their replacement was underway.• There was a need to consider the governance arrangements for making changes to the internal audit plan.• In terms of the effectiveness of the control environment, the Chairperson noted that the report was silent about what we do in terms of agreed actions in response to high priority RIAS and Audit Wales recommendations. Once an analysis has been undertaken of where we are with the agreed management actions and the response to audit findings, a statement in the report about this would add more rigour to what is written about the control environment.
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Date Decision Made	9 November 2023

120. Forward Work Programme 2023-24

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee considered and approved the updated Forward Work Programme for 2023-24.</p> <p>In considering the report, Members noted a number of issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Member proposed that the Committee should have a list of public strategies and policies that are published regularly to ensure they are revised and updated according to a stated schedule.• The Chairperson requested that an initial draft of the Forward Work Programme for the year starting in April 2024 be prepared for consideration at the next meeting.
Date Decision Made	9 November 2023

121. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	9 November 2023

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this [link](#).

The meeting closed at 12:18pm.