

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 18 APRIL 2024

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, 18 APRIL 2024 AT 10:00.

Present Virtually

G Chapman – Chairperson (lay member)

S J Bletsoe
M L Hughes

C Davies
MJ Williams

RM Granville

S J Griffiths

Lay Members - Present Virtually

A Bagley

B Olorunnisola

Apologies for Absence

A Williams

Declarations of Interest

G Chapman – Personal – item 6 - Chair of the Vale of Glamorgan Council Governance and Audit Committee.

Officers:

Carys Lord
Kelly Watson
Deborah Exton
Nigel Smith
Martin Morgans
Rachel Keepins
Alex Rawlin
Kate Pask
Samantha Clements
David Williams
Rachel Harries
Andrew Wathan
Joan Davies

Chief Officer - Finance, Housing & Change
Chief Officer - Legal & Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy
Deputy Head of Finance
Group Manager - Chief Accountant
Head of Partnerships and Housing
Democratic Services Manager
Corporate Policy & Public Affairs Manager
Corporate Improvement Officer - Performance
Audit Wales
Audit Wales
Audit Wales
Head of Regional Internal Audit Service
Deputy Head of the Regional Internal Audit Service

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Simon Roberts
Stephen Griffiths

Senior Fraud Investigator
Democratic Services Officer – Committees/ Interim Scrutiny Officer

135. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> The Minutes of the meeting on 25 January 2024 were approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	18 April 2024

136. Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report was to submit to the Committee reports from Audit Wales. Two reports were submitted for consideration:</p> <p>Use of performance information: Service User perspective and Outcomes - Bridgend County Borough Council.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members discussed a number of issues, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The importance of exemplars and sharing good practice.• The need for a focus on outputs and outcomes.• The concern of Members about capturing the user perspective to improve services.• The lack of comparative information on how Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) compares to other authorities in Wales.• The potential value of looking at other sectors.• Whether the authors had drawn on the experience of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. <p>In response to these points, officers from Audit Wales indicated that BCBC was not an outlier. Some authorities were doing more but that could simply be a result of the resources available to them. In addition, there would be a national report that drew together the findings from this work.</p>
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	<p>Digital Strategy Review: Bridgend County Borough Council.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members and Officers discussed a number of issues, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council’s approach to building business cases and cost justification for significant IT projects.• The importance of learning from projects: what was promised, what was completed, what was the outcome, and how we communicate with stakeholders.• The role of the Digital Transformation Board.• The importance of leadership and a vision (as opposed to mending, making do and stitching systems together) to drive where we want to be from a digital perspective.• That an updated Digital Strategy will be produced by the end of the calendar year.• The need for every recommendation in the report to be addressed in producing the new strategy.• The value of the Welsh Local Government Association’s (WLGA) Digital Advisory Group.• The challenges associated with digital transformation when budgets are so tight. <p>In addition to the two reports, the timeliness of reports was discussed as well as the need for the action plans to be included in submissions to the Committee.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports at Appendix A and Appendix B.</p>
Date Decision Made	18 April 2024

137. Governance and Audit Committee Action Record

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an update on the Governance and Audit Committee Action Record.</p> <p>Members commented on the appointment of a new lay member and the need to be cognisant of the gender imbalance on the Committee.</p>
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	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the Action Record and requested that the Monitoring Officer be consulted about whether the Chair could be involved in the appointment of the new lay member.</p>
Date Decision Made	18 April 2024

138. Renewal of the Regional Internal Audit Shared Service Partnership Agreement

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report was to seek views from the Governance and Audit Committee on the proposal to renew the existing Regional Internal Audit Shared Service (RIASS) Partnership Agreement with the Vale of Glamorgan remaining as the host authority, before the proposal is recommended to Cabinet for approval.</p> <p>Members provided comments on several issues related to the report, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Given the financial situation in local government, partnerships were vital to deliver services.• Moving forward, there should be greater efficiencies for all partners through economies of scale with further development of specialist auditors working across all partners.• The challenge of recruiting auditors to work in the public sector.• In terms of ensuring value for money from an in-house provider, the Head of the Regional Internal Audit Service responded by stating the cost per audit day was below average for the sector and approximately two thirds of SWAP Internal Audit Services. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee considered and supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proposal that the existing Regional Internal Audit Shared Service (RIASS) Partnership Agreement be renewed, with the Vale of Glamorgan Council continuing as host authority, to reinforce business resilience.• That three of the original partners continue with the arrangement and sign a new Partnership Agreement - the partners being Vale of Glamorgan, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil Councils.• The proposal that the Partnership Agreement run continually with a formal partner review built in
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	<p>every five years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proposal that additional partners could join the RIASS as equal partners subject to RIASS Board approval. <p>It was noted that any views would be included when the proposal is recommended to Cabinet for approval.</p>
Date Decision Made	18 April 2024

139. Progress Against The Internal Audit Risk Based Plan 2023-24

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of the report was to provide members of the Committee with a position statement on progress being made against the audit work within the approved Internal Audit Risk Based Plan 2023-24.</p> <p>The progress made against the approved internal audit risk-based plan 2023-24 shows that 33 of 47 planned audit reviews have been completed which equates to a completion rate of 70%. In addition, 11 audits are nearing completion and if concluded over the next few weeks they will be included in the completion figure for 2023-24. The Regional Internal Audit Service (RIAS) has set a target of 80% completion by the end of financial year.</p> <p>Based on the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the areas examined through testing of the effectiveness of the internal control environment, audit opinions have been given to 31 audits out of the 33 completed. 27 audits have been given Substantial or Reasonable assurance and 4 audits have been given Limited assurance.</p> <p>A total of 162 recommendations have been made to date to improve the control environment. The progress being made in implementing these is regularly monitored by Internal Audit and reported to the Committee.</p> <p>Members provided comments on several issues related to the report, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The limited assurance opinion in respect of Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School.• That issues to do with the schools had been discussed at the Corporate Management Board.• The lack of a representative from the Education, Early Years & Young People Directorate at the meeting to address issues raised in the report and to answer questions from Members.
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	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>Members of the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Noted the content of the report and the progress made against the 2023-24 Internal Audit Risk Based Plan; and,• Requested that the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director - Education, Early Years & Young People are invited to attend the next meeting.
Date Decision Made	18 April 2024

140. Internal Audit Recommendation Monitoring

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of the report was to provide members of the Committee with a position statement on internal audit recommendations that have been made to identify those that have been implemented and those that are outstanding as at 28th March 2024.</p> <p>A total of 87 high and medium priority recommendations were made following the conclusion of audits from the 2023-24 annual plan. All have been agreed and, to date, 48 have been implemented, 2 are overdue and 37 have a future implementation date. In respect of audits completed prior to this current financial year, there are 2 recommendations overdue, that is the agreed implementation date has passed, and 7 with a future implementation date.</p> <p>Members provided comments on several issues related to the report, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vehicle fuel management (fuel cards), where implementation was delayed but has now commenced.• Private funds in schools, and whether the issue could be addressed through the scrutiny process.• Business resilience and succession planning related to delays in the implementation of recommendations.• The need for an updated parking strategy. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>Members of the Governance and Audit Committee:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Noted the content of the report and considered the information provided in respect of the status of the high and medium priority recommendations made by the Regional Internal Audit Service.• Requested that the heads of service provide written updates to the next meeting of the Committee in respect of all the matters set out in Appendix B and C, indicating where they are in their action plan and when the matters outlined will be concluded if they are not by that date.• Requested that the issue of private funds in schools be considered for referral to a scrutiny committee.
Date Decision Made	18 April 2024

141. ICT Department Processes and Procedures

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the Governance and Audit Committee how the ICT Department's processes and procedures are maintained to ensure an efficient operating model that minimises disruption to the Council. The report highlighted the key aims of protecting the networks, data, and services that the Council delivers. This covers all aspects of cyber security, from the secure design of systems and services through to access management and the handling of incidents.</p> <p>Members provided comments on a couple of issues related to the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the report provided reassurance to the Committee about the approach to ICT processes and procedures.• That it was clear serious attempts were being made to share good practice in the sector.• That recruitment to senior ICT roles in local government was extremely challenging. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>
Date Decision Made	18 April 2024

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142. Self-Assessment Approach for 2023/24

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of the report was to outline an approach to the development of the Council's self-assessment 2023-24.</p> <p>Members drew attention to the fact that this was a fairly new process, and that patience was needed to ensure it became embedded in our culture.</p> <p>It was announced that a workshop would be held on 3 June for members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to explore Service User Perspectives.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>Members of the Governance and Audit Committee noted, considered and supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proposed way forward for the self-assessment for 2023-24.• The self-assessment structure set out in Appendix 1.• The proposed methodology for scoring aims set out in Appendix 2.• The options for ongoing public consultation and engagement outlined in paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10.
Date Decision Made	18 April 2024

143. Statement of Accounts 2022-23: Lessons Learned

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of the report was to present to the Governance and Audit Committee the lessons learned following the completion of the audit of the 2022-23 Statement of Accounts.</p> <p>Members drew attention to the Workshop referred to in paragraph 3.4 and the opportunity it had provided for staff to contribute to the improvement of processes and systems.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>Members of the Governance and Audit Committee noted the report.</p>
Date Decision Made	18 April 2024

144. Forward Work Programme 2024-25

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report was to seek approval for the updated Forward Work Programme for 2024-25</p> <p>Members discussed several issues related to the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The payment system for school meals and whether this needed to be considered as part of the scrutiny process.• The criteria and lead in time for reports to the Committee. It was noted that the Monitoring Officer would be approached about this, and Members would be contacted directly with an update. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee considered and approved the updated Forward Work Programme for 2024-25.</p> <p>That the Chief Executive and Corporate Director - Education, Early Years & Young People should be invited to attend the next meeting.</p>
Date Decision Made	18 April 2024

145. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	18 April 2024

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

The meeting closed at 12:46.