

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 24 APRIL 2025

**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, 24 APRIL 2025 AT 10:00**

Present

G Chapman – Chairperson

RM Granville

S Easterbrook

C Davies

Present Virtually

N Clarke

S J Griffiths

MJ Williams

Lay Members - Present Virtually

B Olorunnisola

A Bagley

Deb Austin

Attendees:

J Spanswick

Apologies for Absence

M L Hughes and R J Smith

Declarations of Interest

None

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

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Officers:

Carys Lord	Chief Officer - Finance, Housing & Change
Deborah Exton	Deputy Head of Finance
Sara-Jane Byrne	Audit Wales
Lucy Herman	Audit Wales
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Simon Roberts	Senior Fraud Investigator
Joan Davies	Deputy Head of Regional Internal Audit Service
Alex Rawlin	Corporate Policy & Performance Manager
Nimi Chandrasena	Democratic Services Officer - Support
Kate Pask	Corporate Performance Manager
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer - Legal & Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy
Stephen Griffiths	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Christopher Morris	Finance Manager - Financial Control, Closing & Systems

207. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	The Minutes of the meeting on 30 January 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	24 April 2025

208. Governance and Audit Committee Action Record

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report was to provide Members with the Governance and Audit Committee Action Record.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the Action Record and provided comments, as appropriate.</p>
Date Decision Made	24 April 2025

209. Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report was to submit to the Committee three reports from Audit Wales: details of the quarterly update on the Work Programme and Timetable as at the end of March 2025, along with the Annual Audit Summary 2024 and Detailed Audit Plan 2025.</p> <p>In response to the report, a Member welcomed the small refund in the fee for Audit Wales services.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports at Appendix A, Appendix B and Appendix C.</p>
Date Decision Made	24 April 2025

210. Regulatory Tracker

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Governance and Audit Committee on the Regulatory Tracker updated to the end of quarter 3 (Q3) of 2024-25 and issues raised on the Regulatory Tracker reported to the committee in January 2025.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members raised and discussed a number of issues, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That it would be helpful to have a column with the original agreed date for actions to be completed and a separate column for revised dates.• Whether a live document could be created to track progress on a more regular basis.• That it was not always clear why an action had a red or amber designation.• That a further discussion outside the meeting was required to consider and agree what is required to provide a rationale for a referral from the Governance and Audit Committee to Scrutiny. Ideally, the rationale should involve consideration of value for money and quality of service delivery.
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	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Governance and Audit Committee considered the updated process for Corporate Management Board consideration of the regulatory tracker, agreed to change regulatory tracker updates at GAC to April and October each year (and those with a red designation reported to meetings in between), and considered the scrutiny arrangements at paragraphs 3.10-3.15.</p> <p>In addition, Members proposed that where two consecutive reds for any action are reported to the Committee, then the appropriate Cabinet Member and Director will be invited to the next meeting of the Committee to explore the reasons for the delay.</p>
Date Decision Made	24 April 2025

211. Self-Assessment Approach for 2024/ 25

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report was to reflect on the self-assessment 2023/24 and present the Governance and Audit Committee with a proposed approach to the development of the self-assessment 2024/25.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members raised and discussed a number of issues, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In terms of long-term analysis and capturing performance trends, it was important to add visualisations that captured what has got better, what could be getting worse, and whether there was a need to refocus from an area of activity to another.• Whether there was scope to revise the process further after the Annual Meeting of the Council in May and the arrival of the new Chief Executive in July.• The different roles of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee in the process. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee's role is to analyse the performance data in detail and consider whether the narrative matches what they have seen and evaluated in terms of performance across the Council. The role of the Governance and Audit Committee is much more one of providing assurance that the Council has performance mechanisms and a performance framework that is able to accurately provide the Council with an honest assessment of its performance. Given these different roles, it would be preferable if the Self-Assessment went to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee first and then Governance and
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	<p>Audit Committee. The current process required that the draft Self-Assessment be considered by the Governance and Audit Committee before going to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Given this, and ahead of any discussions about changing the process, it would be useful for Members of the Committee to receive an update in September on any changes made by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Governance and Audit Committee considered and agreed the proposed way forward for the self-assessment 2024/25.</p>
Date Decision Made	24 April 2025

212. Code of Corporate Governance

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of the report was to present to the Governance and Audit Committee the updated Code of Corporate Governance for consideration and approval.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members raised and discussed a number of issues, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the Code needed to reflect the decision at the last Council on 9 April to recognise the importance of the Nature Emergency declared by Senedd in 2021, and to work proactively with Welsh Government to achieve new targets for the protection and restoration of biodiversity across the County Borough.• The Chair thanked officers for providing a draft with track changes and requested that 'independent members' be added to the glossary. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Governance and Audit Committee considered and approved the Council's updated Code of Corporate Governance at Appendix B, subject to the inclusion of appropriate amendments to take account of the agreed motion on the Nature Emergency at Council on 9 April.
Date Decision Made	24 April 2025

213. Anti-Tax Evasion Policy Review

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report was to present the updated Anti-Tax Evasion Policy to the Governance and Audit Committee for consideration prior to the Policy being presented to Cabinet for approval.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members raised and discussed a number of issues, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whether a Community Council was a ‘relevant body’ as far as the Criminal Finances Act 2017 was concerned. The Chief Officer - Finance, Housing & Change undertook to clarify this and inform Members in due course.• Whether extra training for Members could be needed on this policy. The Deputy Head of Finance indicated that there was not specific training on the policy itself but there were a number of training modules available on fraud and its prevention.• The possible sources of tax evasion and system weaknesses that require constant vigilance by officers. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee considered the amended Anti-Tax Evasion Policy attached at Appendix A.</p> <p>Officers undertook to explore what further training could be provided for Members, when policies are amended and updated.</p>
Date Decision Made	24 April 2025

214. Fraud Strategy and Framework 2025/26 to 2027/28

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report was to provide the Committee with the Council’s updated Fraud Strategy and Framework 2025/26 to 2027/28 in accordance with the functions of the Governance and Audit Committee, prior to submission to Cabinet for approval. The strategy outlines the overarching structure and approach to fraud risk management.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members raised and discussed a number of issues, including the following:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The risk of fraud in the Council's supply chain and whether any had been discovered over the last year. In response, the Deputy Head of the Regional Internal Audit Service indicated that when they develop their annual plan of work, they always look at areas of risk like creditors, procurement, invoicing, including in schools and care homes, and other aspects of the supply chain.• Following on from the discussion of the Corporate Fraud Report 2023-24 at the July 2024 meeting of the Committee, a Member asked about the outcome from the possibility of employing more people in the Fraud Department, and whether this was a way of increasing revenue for the Council. The Chief Officer - Finance, Housing & Change noted that this had been explored but that a decision had been made that the best use of resource would be to increase resource in the Benefits Team. Additional resources have been allocated to reviews to ensure that client information is updated regularly to ensure entitlement to Benefits is accurate and reduce the over payment of benefits.• That it was important to identify measures of success. The Senior Fraud Investigator undertook to look at this again.• That nationally schools are the largest source of internal referrals but that, as the Deputy Head of the Regional Internal Audit Service noted, the referrals were minor in value, and it was usually for assurance purposes rather than because of the identification of suspected fraud.• Whether the strategy covered Blue Badges. The Senior Fraud Investigator confirmed that it did.• That it was important to identify good practice, especially in the use of digital technologies and that, as such, we should draw on the expertise at Data Cymru.• A representative from Audit Wales drew attention to the National Fraud Initiative, whose work can be found at the following address: https://www.audit.wales/our-work/national-fraud-initiative. The representative also noted that the team were currently considering undertaking a review in respect of counter fraud arrangements. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee reviewed the Council's updated Fraud Strategy and Framework 2025/26 to 2027/28 prior to submission to Cabinet for approval.</p>
Date Decision Made	24 April 2025

215. Internal Audit Recommendation Monitoring

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report was to provide members of the Committee with a position statement on internal audit recommendations made, implemented and outstanding as of 31st March 2025 and consider the information provided in respect of the status of the high and medium priority recommendations made by the Regional Internal Audit Service.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members raised and discussed a number of issues, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The serious delays in the implementation of agreed actions in respect of three areas: Home to Work Mileage in Council Vehicles, Parking Enforcement, and the Porthcawl Harbour Annual Return.• Whether the issues highlighted suggest there could be a pattern emerging about the culture in a particular Directorate, and also therefore if there is a single point of failure in that Directorate.• That the identified work on Rights of Way would be completed by the end of June. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>Members of the Governance and Audit Committee 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.</p> <p>Members recommended that the appropriate Cabinet Member, Corporate Director, and responsible officers be invited to a special meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee to be organised before the next scheduled meeting to review and discuss three issues highlighted in the following reports: Home to Work Mileage in Council Vehicles, Parking Enforcement, and the Porthcawl Harbour Annual Return.</p> <p>Members requested that a written update be submitted that addresses the issues highlighted in respect of Corporate Safeguarding – Contracts.</p>
Date Decision Made	24 April 2025

216. Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Decision Made	The purpose of this report was to seek approval for the updated Forward Work Programme for 2025-26. <u>RESOLVED:</u> That the Committee considered and approved the updated Forward Work Programme for 2025-26, subject to two amendments: that the dates for the submission of the Regulatory Tracker be revised to reflect the recommendation in Agenda Item 6, and the organisation of a special meeting in late May or early June to consider the issues highlighted in Agenda Item 11.
Date Decision Made	24 April 2025

217. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	24 April 2025

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

The meeting closed at 12:31.