

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 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, 18 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 10:00

Present

G Chapman – Chairperson (lay member)

M L Hughes

RM Granville

O Clatworthy

Present Virtually

C Davies
MJ Williams

S Easterbrook
S J Griffiths

B Olorunnisola
RL Penhale-Thomas

A Bagley

Present Virtually (lay members)

A Bagley

B Olorunnisola

Present (Leader and Cabinet Member)

J Spanswick

P Davies

Apologies for absence

None

Declarations of Interest

G Chapman – Item 3 – Personal - Lay Inspector, ESTYN.

S Easterbrook – Item 3 – Personal – Ward member, Bridgend Central.

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Officers:

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| Carys Lord | Chief Officer - Finance, Housing & Change |
| Lindsay Harvey | Corporate Director - Education, Early Years & Young People |
| Janine Nightingale | Corporate Director - Communities |
| Deborah Exton | Deputy Head of Finance |
| Nigel Smith | Group Manager - Chief Accountant |
| Simon Roberts | Senior Fraud Investigator |
| Martin Morgans | Interim Head of Operations - Community Services |
| Andrew Wathan | Head of Regional Internal Audit Service |
| Joan Davies | Deputy Head of Regional Internal Audit Service |
| Lucy Herman | Audit Wales |
| Stephen Griffiths | Interim Scrutiny Officer |
| Oscar Roberts | Business Administrative Apprentice - Democratic Services |

247. Update Report in Relation to Internal Audit Activity at Maesteg School and Penybont Primary School

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| Decision Made | <p>The purpose of the report was to provide the Committee with an update in respect of recent Internal Audit recommendations following visits to Bridgend schools, and the subsequent actions taken by those schools, during the 2024-2025 school year.</p> <p>In response to the report, members discussed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The progress that has been made, that this represented a positive outcome, and was testament to the value of the internal auditing process: The head teachers in both schools concerned were welcoming of the audit findings and internal audit revisiting in the future. This showed that both schools had done some really good work that ought to be acknowledged. Other members echoed these comments.• In respect of Maesteg School, it would be helpful to have sight of the financial procedure guide.• Although the internal auditing process had worked well, questions remained about why the headteachers in these two schools did not know what they were supposed to be doing in the first place. This suggested the need for training, especially in respect of the responsibilities of head teachers, risk management and financial controls. In response to this, the Corporate Director - Education, Early Years & Young People noted that since the initial report a training event was put in place for senior leaders and attended by the Head and Deputy Head of the Regional Internal Audit |
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| | <p>Service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There remained a question mark about the root causes and whether the necessary assurances had been provided that these issues are not happening in other schools. In response, the Corporate Director - Education, Early Years & Young People drew attention to the role of the local authority in ensuring that effective practice, from all sources, is disseminated and acted upon. Team Bridgend is particularly important for this as it brings all head teachers together with various officers, internal and external, to share best practice and then ensure that it has been adopted.• The financial controls on the use of purchasing cards.• Where responsibility lies to ensure Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks are carried out. The Corporate Director - Education, Early Years & Young People indicated that it was a shared responsibility between the schools, who are responsible for staffing, and the local authority who are the employer, and so ensure that staff are appropriately employed and checked. Bridgend was now in line with all other local authorities in Wales in terms of meeting the legal expectation for DBS checks.• The importance of safeguarding training. The Corporate Director - Education, Early Years & Young People noted that, from the perspective of the local authority, although it cannot be mandated, there is an expectation that as many people in schools are trained as possible, and that what is done in Bridgend is quite innovative, in that shared audits take place with schools every year with regard to safeguarding procedures.• The importance of having clear procedures, updated as new guidance is received, and delineation around the use of private funds in schools.• Whether or not the audit findings of any particular school are made available or easily accessed by other headteachers or those responsible for finance in other schools. The Corporate Director - Education, Early Years & Young People noted that schools are not made an example of but that where issues crop up, they are shared with schools. In his experience, this was well received by head teachers.• The use and role of statutory notices in ensuring effective management in schools. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the contents of the report and requested that the system for DBS checks in schools be referred for consideration by the Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> |
| Date Decision Made | 18/09/25 |

248. Position Statement on Internal Audit Recommendations for Parking Enforcement, Home to Work Mileage for Council Vehicles and Porthcawl Harbour

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| Decision Made | <p>The purpose of the report was to provide Members of the Governance and Audit Committee with a position statement on Internal Audit recommendations made, implemented, and outstanding in respect of Parking Enforcement, Home to Work Mileage for Council Vehicles and Porthcawl Harbour.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members raised and discussed the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In terms of Parking Enforcement, whether there was the capacity to implement the recommendations as soon as possible. The Corporate Director – Communities noted that parking enforcement was taking place as normal. The recommendation was about putting in place an overarching strategy or policy to outline the key duties, powers, and objectives of the Parking Enforcement Team, and this was scheduled to go to Cabinet in October.• In terms of Home to Work Mileage:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ how many vehicles the Council used and whether there was any tracking in place to monitor their use. The Corporate Director – Communities indicated that there are more than three hundred across all directorates. There was tracking on operational maintenance machines, but the reason for that was about route optimisation. It was not about tracking where people take them, although it was known where vehicles are. Everything is monitored in the joint fleet maintenance depot at the Ty Thomas Joint Vehicle Maintenance Facility that the Council shares with South Wales Police.▪ Whether eleven months was a reasonable length of time to carry out the fleet review. The Corporate Director – Communities indicated that it could be delivered earlier but there were complicating factors, including the fact that waste management was being brought in-house. and whether the contractual arrangements for fleet maintenance with South Wales Police would remain in place given that the depot is not currently big enough to maintain waste vehicles. <p>In terms of Porthcawl Harbour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The two Internal audit recommendations: a) that the Harbour Board should formally receive and |
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| | <p>agree the annual accounts, with this recorded in the minutes; and b) in line with the Harbour Engagement Strategy, a business plan should be presented to the Harbour Board and subject to regular monitoring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whether Porthcawl Harbour had the most appropriate governance structure and if there should be more political representation, oversight and accountability. In response, the Corporate Director – Communities informed the Committee that the structure was as it is for reasons of operational efficiency. There were two layers, a board which is required by statute as part of being a harbour authority and then a stakeholder group of those people that play a key role in the harbour. In this way, it was no different to other entities of this type.• Whether the business plan should be referred to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in addition to being considered by Cabinet. Elected representatives should be given the opportunity to have an appropriate level of scrutiny over the business plan.• The need for clarity about a) the scheme of delegation in this area; b) spending limits; and c) strategic and operational decision-making. In response, the Chief Officer - Finance, Housing & Change indicated that the scheme of delegation in this area was clear, but she would ensure that it was sent to Members. The key challenge was how Members were kept informed about issues around the harbour, which is a reporting issue within the Council. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Noted the content of the report provided in respect of the position statement on internal audit recommendations made, implemented, and outstanding made by the Regional Internal Audit Service; andb) Referred the issue of Porthcawl Harbour, and specifically its governance structure, for consideration by the Communities, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. |
| Date Decision Made | 18/09/25 |

249. Treasury Management Outturn Report 2024-25

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| Decision Made | <p>The purpose of the report was to provide an update on Treasury Management activity for the year 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025.</p> <p>In response to the report, Members:</p> |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thanked the team for their hard work.• Noted that it was clear that treasury management in the Council was working well.• Asked whether, given the wider worldwide situation, especially in respect of the Middle East and Israel in particular, there had been any new guidance from the UK Government on how to ensure investments remain ethical. In response, the Group Manager - Chief Accountant indicated that there was a section of the Treasury Management Strategy about the investing principle that prioritises environmental issues, social issues, and corporate governance (ESG), officers received advice from treasury management advisors (including being sent lists of organisations that meet ESG standards). It was also noted that most of the Council's investments were with central government and also in money market funds. The focus was on ensuring security and return.• Further, the Chief Officer - Finance, Housing & Change added that the Treasury Management Strategy formed part of the suite of documents presented when the budget is being set in February, and that officers look to see what's happened in the marketplace and whether or not the strategy needs to be updated. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Noted the treasury management activities for the 2024-25 financial year.• Noted the Treasury Management Indicators for the period year ending 31 March 2025 against those approved in the Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25. |
| Date Decision Made | 18/09/25 |

250. Annual Corporate Fraud Report 2024-25

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| Decision Made | The purpose of this report was to present members of the Committee with the Annual Corporate Fraud Report 2024-25, which summarises the actions undertaken in respect of counter fraud. The report also provides an update on the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) exercise and includes a completed self-appraisal checklist that Audit Wales encouraged all participating bodies to complete. |
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| | <p>In response to the report, Members raised the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Chair thanked the team for the training event that was organised for Members. A Member noted later in the meeting that he thought the illustrations used were clear and provided Members with an idea of how sophisticated some of the frauds are and the challenge this presents for staff.• Whether, given that most estimates put the loss from fraud for local authorities at between half a percent and 5%, which would suggest that the Council was underestimating the amount of fraud currently taking place, there were any stones that are being left unturned in terms of looking for fraud and error. In response, the Chief Officer - Finance, Housing & Change noted that this was an area that was looked at continually and that the Council had invested in an additional post dealing with housing benefits to make sure that there was the capacity to do necessary checks and so limit the possibility of fraud. She noted also that it was an area that could be looked at again from a budget point of view, on an 'invest to save' basis, and that the Senior Fraud Officer linked in with officers from other local authorities to share good practice and bring back ideas that could benefit our approach to counter fraud.• An issue in respect of the single person discount for the payment of Council Tax and the electoral register. The Chief Officer - Finance, Housing & Change asked if the issue could be discussed outside the meeting.• A lay member noted that in the Self-appraisal checklist (annex 5) there was a missing 'Yes' in 19 and 22. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the Annual Corporate Fraud Report 2024-25, the steps in place to support continual improvement, the work being undertaken to prevent and detect fraud and error and the update on the National Fraud Initiative to include the completed self-appraisal checklist.</p> <p>The Committee formally thanked the team for the training event provided for Members.</p> |
| Date Decision Made | 18/09/25 |

251. Urgent Items

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| Decision Made | None |
| Date Decision Made | 18/09/25 |

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

The meeting closed at 11:41.