

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

Minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a remote attendance meeting on Thursday, 26 September 2024

PRESENT:

Co-opted Members: **Brian Harvey (Chair)**, Sally Ellis and Allan Rainford

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Teresa Carberry, Ted Palmer, Andrew Parkhurst, Linda Thew and Allan Marshall (substitute for Andy Hughes)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Mared Eastwood (Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language & Culture) and Linda Thomas (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services) attended as observers

APOLOGIES: Chief Executive and Councillor Christine Jones (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Well-being)

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Paul Johnson (Cabinet Member for Finance and Social Value), Chief Officer (Governance) and Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager

Chief Officer (Education and Youth) and Strategic Finance Manager (Schools) for minute no. 37

Mike Whiteley and Carwyn Rees from Audit Wales

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Officer

28. SUBSTITUTION

In line with Constitutional requirements, the Committee agreed to allow Councillor Allan Marshall (who had undertaken the requisite training) to substitute for Councillor Andy Hughes.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Allan Marshall be permitted as a substitute for the meeting.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

On minute no. 37 (School Reserves), a personal interest was declared by the Chair and Councillors Teresa Carberry, Allan Marshall and Linda Thew as school governors. Sally Ellis declared a personal interest on the same item due to her son being employed by a school in Flintshire.

30. **MINUTES** ([Link to recording](#))

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendment on minute 23, the minutes of the meeting held on [24 July 2024](#) be approved as a correct record.

31. **CORPORATE SELF-ASSESSMENT** ([Link to recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented a report on the findings of the [Corporate Self-Assessment 2023/24](#) and opportunities identified for improvement.

During the debate, concerns were raised that some of the responses may require a 'sense check', for example on question B15. Members of the Committee agreed to raise any other areas of concern with officers by 11 October so that an updated report could be brought to the next meeting.

On that basis, the recommendations were supported.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee is assured of the findings of the Corporate Self-Assessment 2023/24;
- (b) That the Committee is assured of the opportunities for improvement identified in the Corporate Self-assessment 2023/24; and
- (c) That Members forward any areas for review to the Internal Audit Manager by 11 October 2024 to enable a further report to be brought in November.

32. **SETTING OF WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES** ([Link to recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented the [report](#) to review the Council's response to the four recommendations for improvement advised by Audit Wales, following consideration by the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

The recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee is assured of the recommendations for improvement.

33. **NOMINATING MEMBERS TO THE CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE'S OWN GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE** ([Link to recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented a [report](#) to nominate Members to the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee's own Governance and

Audit Committee. He agreed to establish whether there was a mandatory training requirement for those serving on the joint committee.

The nominations put forward by the Committee were accepted by those two Members. The Chair advised that a discussion prior to the meeting had found that none of the co-optees wished to be nominated for the joint committee. On that basis, the recommendations were supported.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee nominates Councillor Andrew Parkhurst to serve on the Governance & Audit Committee of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee and Councillor Ted Palmer to serve as a substitute;
- (b) That the Committee does not wish to nominate a Lay Member to the Governance & Audit Committee of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee; and
- (c) That the Chief Officer (Governance) ascertain whether there is a mandatory training requirement for nominations to the Corporate Joint Committee Governance & Audit Committee.

34. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT ([Link to recording](#))

The Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager presented the [report](#) to update the Committee on progress against the Audit Plan, final reports issued, actions, performance indicators and current investigations.

On responses to client questionnaires, the Internal Audit Manager agreed to review the questions to try to improve response rates.

An additional motion was supported in response to concerns about the number of overdue actions, in particular those identified as high priority in areas such as Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation.

On that basis, the recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be accepted; and
- (b) That a report be requested from the Chief Executive, summarising his perspective of the main reasons for delayed actions, aside from the lack of resources, and proposals for improving the timeliness and accuracy of fulfilling action plans within the next six months. In addition, that the responsible senior officer and Cabinet Member attend the Committee to provide explanation where there are insufficient reasons for delays with high priority overdue actions.

35. ACTION TRACKING ([Link to recording](#))

The Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager presented the [report](#) on progress with actions from previous meetings of the Committee. She agreed to liaise with the Democratic Services Manager to follow up the request for meetings between the Chair and Vice-Chair of this Committee and Chairs of Overview & Scrutiny committees.

The recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee accepts the report.

36. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME ([Link to recording](#))

The Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager presented the current [Forward Work Programme](#) for consideration. Due to the number of items scheduled for the November meeting, she agreed to liaise with officers to consider whether some could be deferred.

The following items were agreed for the November meeting:

- Update report on the Corporate Self-Assessment.
- Report on action tracking from the Chief Executive.

On that basis, the recommendations were supported.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the Forward Work Programme be accepted, as amended; and

(b) That the Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

37. SCHOOL RESERVES YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2024 AND DEMOGRAPHICS ([Link to recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) and Strategic Finance Manager (Schools) presented the annual [report](#) on reserves held by Flintshire schools together with the risks and internal processes associated with schools in deficit. The report had been shared with all Headteachers and had been considered by the Schools Budget Forum and the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the report, level of school reserves as at 31 March 2024 and overview of schools' current financial position.

38. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

None.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 12.20pm)

.....
Chair

Meetings of the Governance and Audit Committee are webcast and can be viewed by visiting the webcast library at <http://flintshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>