

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
25 NOVEMBER 2024

Minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Thursday, 25 November 2024

PRESENT:

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

Councillors: Teresa Carberry, Bill Crease, Andrew Parkhurst and Jason Shallcross

ALSO PRESENT: Linda Thomas (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services) attended as an observer

APOLOGY: Councillor Bernie Attridge

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Richard Jones (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transformation and Assets), Councillor Paul Johnson (Cabinet Member for Finance and Social Value), Chief Executive, Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager, Corporate Finance Manager, Strategic Finance Manager, Mike Whiteley and Carwyn Rees from Audit Wales

Chief Officer (Governance) and Customer Contact Service Manager - for minute number 42

Chris Phillips - Service Manager, Older People and Fflur Jones of Audit Wales - for minute number 46

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Officer and Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None.

40. MINUTES ([Link to recording](#))

RESOLVED:

That the [minutes](#) of the meeting held on 26 September 2024 be approved as a correct record.

41. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair indicated that there would be a slight change in the order of business to bring forward agenda item 8 to enable the officers to present that item. The remainder of the items would be considered in the order shown on the agenda.

42. PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES ANNUAL LETTER 2023-24 AND HALF-YEAR COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE 2024-25 ([Link to recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Governance) and Customer Contact Service Manager presented a [report \(agenda item 8\)](#) on the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Annual Letter summarising the Council's performance on complaints investigated during 2023-24. The report also included an overview of complaints received by each portfolio during the first half of 2024-25.

This was a positive report in which action tracking was particularly welcomed. Officers noted the suggestion for future reports to include more detail on the nature of complaints on Appendix 1.

The recommendations were supported, together with an additional motion to welcome the lessons learned.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the improving annual performance of the Council in respect of complaints made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales during 2023-24;
- (b) That the Committee notes the half year performance of the Council (2024-25) in respect of complaints made to services in line with the Concerns and Complaints Policy;
- (c) That the Committee supports the priorities outlined in paragraph 1.25; and
- (d) That the Committee notes and welcomes the lessons that have been learned.

43. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24 ([Link to recording](#))

The Corporate Finance Manager presented a [report \(agenda item 4\)](#) to seek approval of the final audited version of the Statement of Accounts 2023/24. He thanked the Strategic Finance Manager and his team for their work on this, along with that of Audit Wales colleagues. An emerging legal matter was highlighted, relating to a local government organisation of which the Council was one of the members. The Committee was informed of additional contingent liability wording to be included in the accounts to reflect the risk at this stage. It was noted that a briefing on the outcome would be provided in due course.

In summarising the report by Audit Wales, Mike Whiteley thanked the Finance team for their support during the audit.

On that basis, the recommendations were supported.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Audit Wales report - Audit of the Financial Statements 2023/24 - Flintshire County Council - be noted;

- (b) That the final version of the Statement of Accounts 2023/24 be approved, following consideration of the Audit Wales report; and
- (c) That the Letter of Representation be approved.

44. AUDIT WALES REPORT - FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY ([Link to recording](#))

The Chief Executive introduced the [report \(agenda item 5\)](#) outlining the findings of a local report by Audit Wales, following a review across all 22 Welsh Local Authorities. Appendix 2 to the report set out the Council's response to the recommendation by Audit Wales.

Carwyn Rees of Audit Wales summarised the key findings and advised that the national report was due for publication in December.

During discussion, it was noted that information on Transformation projects would be shared with Cabinet and the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee in December.

The recommendation in the report was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the report on Financial Sustainability from Audit Wales be noted.

45. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW 2024/25 AND Q2 UPDATE ([Link to recording](#))

The Strategic Finance Manager presented a [report \(agenda item 6\)](#) on the draft Treasury Management mid-year report for 2024/25 for recommendation to Cabinet, together with an update on Quarter 2 activities for information.

During discussion, Allan Rainford suggested additional information to accompany the Liability Benchmark section of the mid-year report, and would raise this at the forthcoming Treasury Management training session.

The recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the draft Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2024/25 and confirms there are no matters to be drawn to the attention of Cabinet at its meeting in December.

46. RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT WALES REVIEW 'URGENT AND EMERGENCY CARE: FLOW OUT OF HOSPITAL - NORTH WALES REGION' ([Link to recording](#))

A [report \(agenda item 7\)](#) was introduced by Fflur Jones of Audit Wales on the findings of a review of arrangements to support effective flow out of hospital across the North Wales region.

Chris Phillips, the Council's Service Manager for Older People, provided an overview of actions to address the recommendations by Audit Wales.

Following the debate, it was agreed that the combined management response to the audit recommendations would be circulated to the Committee, as it had been omitted. Information on areas of good practice across Wales would also be shared, in advance of a national report to be published in 2025.

The recommendation was amended to reflect the debate.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Audit Wales report and the measures being taken regionally and locally to implement the recommendations made be noted; and
- (b) That a future item is scheduled on the forward work programme to update the Committee on progress with regional and local actions within the Regional Partnership Board action plan.

47. CORPORATE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2023/24 ([Link to recording](#))

The Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager presented a [report \(agenda item 9\)](#) to update the Committee on the Corporate Self-Assessment as requested at the previous meeting.

The recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee is assured of the update provided to Committee regarding the Corporate Self-assessment 2023/24.

48. GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE SELF-ASSESSMENT - ACTION PLAN - MID-YEAR REVIEW ([Link to recording](#))

The Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager presented a [report \(agenda item 10\)](#) with a detailed action plan to support the results of the Committee's self-assessment.

In response to comments on Annual Report/Accountability, the Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager said that meetings with the new Council Leader and Deputy Leaders would be reinstated.

In respect of the Committee's role, it was suggested that the action plan could include specific reference to the view given by Audit Wales on the Committee taking a longer term view on financial sustainability. Officers would also ensure that the Committee's co-opted members would be invited to budget workshops to be scheduled following receipt of the Provisional Local Government Settlement.

Whilst progress on the Transformation programme would be reported to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee, it was agreed that a high-

level report on long term financial planning would be scheduled on the forward work programme to update this Committee on a six monthly basis.

On that basis, the recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

That having considered the action plan, the Committee supports the following:

- Regular meetings with the Leader and Deputy Leaders of the Council.
- Specific reference to the Committee taking a long term view on financial sustainability to be included in the action plan.
- A six monthly report to be scheduled on the Transformation programme

49. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/24 - MID-YEAR PROGRESS REPORT ([Link to recording](#))

The Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager presented a [report \(agenda item 11\)](#) on progress against managing the issues identified in the Annual Governance Statement.

The recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 Mid-year Progress Report be accepted.

50. GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT ([Link to recording](#))

The Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager presented a [report \(agenda item 12\)](#) to accompany the Committee's Annual Report for 2023/24 for endorsement prior to submitting for approval at Council. She agreed to follow up the request by Councillor Teresa Carberry for further training.

Positive feedback was given in respect of the detailed commentary on where the Committee had added value to processes. It was suggested that wording on the Committee's role on financial sustainability be considered for the next Annual Report.

The recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Report for 2023/24 be endorsed prior to its submission to Council for approval.

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

The Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager presented the [report \(agenda item 13\)](#) on progress with actions from previous meetings of the Committee.

She agreed to liaise with officers on the availability of the follow up report to the Audit Wales review of Commissioning Older People's Care Home Placements.

The recommendation was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the report be accepted.

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

The Internal Audit, Performance & Risk Manager presented the current [Forward Work Programme](#) for consideration. Following earlier discussion on the Transformation programme, she agreed to liaise with officers to schedule an interim report on governance and resourcing arrangements followed by six monthly progress updates.

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.

53. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

None.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 11.45am)

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Chair

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