

GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2025

Present: Councillor S J Carr, Chair

Councillors: K Woodhead
M Brown
R Bullock
J Couch
K A Harlow
A Kingdon
S P Jeremiah
W Mee (substitute)
J M Owen
P J Owen (ex-officio)
P Smith (substitute)
E Winfield

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Cooper, S Dannheimer and S Webb.

17. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

18. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2025 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

19. **AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS**

The Committee considered the latest Audit Progress Report from the Council's external auditors and noted progress made with the 2024/25 audit.

20. **ANNUAL COUNTER FRAUD REPORT**

The Committee were provided with the Annual Counter Fraud Report update.

It was reported that no successful fraudulent activity within the Council has been noted during the financial year 2024/25.

21. **INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee noted the recent work completed by Internal Audit.

It was noted that Internal Audit had also reviewed progress made by management in implementing agreed actions within six months of the completion of the respective audits.

22. GOING CONCERN STATEMENT

The Committee noted the Going Concern Report.

The concept of a 'going concern' assumes that a local authority, its functions and services will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

The Council's financial outturn position 2024/25 showed a £1.369m underspend against revised budget which culminated with a £521k withdrawal from General Fund balances. The General Fund revenue reserves amounted to £5.557m as at 31 March 2025. In addition, the Council held earmarked reserves of £3.048m to meet specific identified pressures, but which ultimately may be diverted to support general expenditure by the Section 151 Officer should the need arise.

23. REVIEW OF STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The Committee considered the Strategic Risk Register and the action plans identified to mitigate risks.

The Strategy provides a comprehensive framework and process designed to support both Members and Officers in ensuring that the Council is able to discharge its risk management responsibilities fully. The Strategy outlines the objectives and benefits of managing risk, describes the responsibilities for risk management, and provides an overview of the process that the Council has in place to manage risk successfully.

RESOLVED that the amendments to the Strategic Risk Register and the actions to mitigate risks as set out be approved.

24. QUARTERLY COMPLAINT REPORT

The Committee noted the summary of complaints made against the Council.

Of the 163 stage one complaints received overall, 25 were investigated under the stage 2 complaints procedure and three were investigated by the LGO.

Under the stage 2 complaints procedure, 13 complaints were not upheld, 12 complaints were upheld.

The Ombudsman investigated seven complaints made against the Council. Three complaints were recorded as not upheld, resulting in no further action being required by the Council, four complaints were upheld.

25. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the work programme.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be approved.

26. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of

business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

27. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT - CONFIDENTIAL

The Committee noted the confidential Internal Audit Progress Report.