



Report to Audit and Governance Committee

Date:	24 March 2021
Title:	Annual Report to Council
Relevant councillor(s):	Cllr Richard Newcombe
Author and/or contact officer:	Maggie Gibb, Head of Business Assurance (& Chief Auditor)
Ward(s) affected:	N/A
Recommendations:	To recommend that the Annual Report be presented to the next Council meeting
Reason for decision:	N/A

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This annual report has been prepared to inform Buckinghamshire Council of the work carried out by the Council's Audit and Governance Committee during the financial year. The content and presentation of this report meets the requirements of the CIPFA Audit Committees Guidance 2018 to report to full Council on a regular basis on the Committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference and the effectiveness of the Committee in meeting its purpose.
- 1.2 Buckinghamshire Council is in a unique position in that it came into existence under lockdown conditions and the whole of its first year has been dominated by the impact of Covid-19.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 The Audit Committee is a key part in the Council's governance framework to provide an independent oversight on the effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk, financial management, and internal control arrangements.
- 2.2 The Audit and Governance Committee has met five times during the year:

1. 10 June 2020
2. 29 July 2020
3. 18 November 2020
4. 27 January 2021
5. 24 March 2021

- 2.3 At each meeting we have reviewed our Forward Work Programme ensuring the work mirrors the level of risks and priorities of the Council. Any actions raised during previous Committee meetings are reviewed for completeness.
- 2.4 Throughout the year, the Committee has continued to receive valued professional reports, support and advice from Corporate Finance, Treasury Management, Risk Management, Procurement, Internal Audit and from our External Auditors.
- 2.5 20/21 has been an extraordinary year due to the launch of the new unitary council on 1 April 2020, and as a result, the Audit and Governance Committee has overseen the auditing of the accounts for the five legacy authorities.
- 2.6 All sets of accounts were given a clean bill of health by the external auditors, and credit must be given to the finance officers who achieved this despite the challenges of both the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and also the loss of key knowledge through the departure of senior finance staff from the legacy authorities.
- 2.7 The Audit and Governance Committee also reviewed the Annual Governance Statements for each of the five legacy authorities in order to assess whether they properly reflected the risk environment and whether the content was consistent with the evaluation of the internal controls and governance arrangements during the year.
- 2.8 In addition, the Committee reviewed the five legacy authorities Treasury Management Annual Reports.
- 2.9 The Committee approved the terms of reference for Internal Audit (Internal Audit Charter) and the Business Assurance Strategy and Annual Audit Plan.
- 2.10 The delivery of the Internal Audit Plan was prevented because key members of the Business Assurance team were redeployed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, planning has continued and it is currently expected that the Internal Audit plan will be delivered in the next municipal year.
- 2.11 Priorities have been reviewed regularly, and the plan has remained fluid to allow for assurance activity to take place in the highest risk areas. The Audit Manager has been leading on the assurance arrangements over the Covid-19 grants received by

Buckinghamshire Council, and the Investigations Team have assisted with the controls over the payments of business grants.

- 2.12 The Risk Management Group is a sub-group of the Audit and Governance Committee and has met five times during the financial year. It will meet for a sixth time on 12th April – before the Council on 21st April 2021. The group review the strategic and directorate risks facing the authority and the internal controls and governance in place to manage those risks to demonstrate how risk management is embedded within Services.
- 2.13 The Audit and Governance Committee undertook the scrutiny role for the development of future Treasury Management strategy prior to its presentation to Council for approval. It also received mid-term and annual reports on the extent of compliance with the approved Treasury Management strategy and an analysis of the performance against the targets set. During the year it recommended the Treasury Management strategy and performance monitoring reports for Council approval.
- 2.14 The Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee would like to thank members and officers who have supported the work of this Committee by presenting, discussing, challenging, and debating solutions to the governance, risk, financial, and control environment of the Council.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 N/A.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 There is regular review of financial risks through the Risk Management Group and the Audit and Governance Committee also considered the value for money conclusions of the external auditors.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 None

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 N/A

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 N/A

8. Next steps and review

8.1 N/A

9. Background papers

9.1 [Audit and Governance Committee agendas.](#)

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.