



## Report to Council

<b>Date:</b>	TBC
<b>Title:</b>	<b>DRAFT Annual Report of the Audit and Governance Committee</b>
<b>Relevant councillor(s):</b>	Cllr Richard Newcombe
<b>Author and/or contact officer:</b>	Maggie Gibb, Head of Business Assurance (& Chief Auditor)
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	N/A
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>Council is asked to note the content of this report</b>
<b>Reason for decision:</b>	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 2022/23 financial year.
- 1.2 In accordance with CIPFA's Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police 2022, the Audit and Governance Committee should report annually on how the committee has complied with the position statement, discharged its responsibilities, and include an assessment of its performance.

### **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 six times during the year:

1. 11 May 2022
2. 28 July 2022
3. 27 September 2022
3. 23 November 2022
4. 1 February 2023
5. 29 March 2023

- 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 The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for approving and monitoring the Council's Whistleblowing Policy, Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and Money Laundering Policy.
  - 2.6 One of the committee's key responsibilities is to approve the Council's Financial Statements and Annual Governance Statement.
  - 2.7 The committee has received regular updates from senior officers and the external auditors on the production and audit of the financial statements and is monitoring the plan to catch up. Only 9% of authorities across the country completed their accounts by the due date and that position has remained. Buckinghamshire Council is experiencing delays in accounts sign off along with many other Councils for a variety of factors including increased complexity, changing regulatory requirements of both councils and auditors and staffing shortages There are about 630 delayed audit opinions outstanding in England.
  - 2.8 As of 30 November 2022, 34% of councils had 2020/21 audits outstanding and 88% had 21/22 audits outstanding.
  - 2.9 The Annual Governance Statements for 2021/22 was agreed in November 2022. Members will consider the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 at the July 2023 meeting.
  - 2.10 The Committee approved the terms of reference for Internal Audit (Internal Audit Charter), the Business Assurance Strategy including the Annual Internal Audit Plan, and the Counter Fraud Plan.
  - 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.
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- 2.12 The Audit and Governance Committee has received updates on the work of the Counter Fraud/Investigations team, including details of successful outcomes, prosecutions and recoveries.
- 2.13 The Risk Management Group is a sub-group of the Audit and Governance Committee and has met seven times during the financial year. The group review the strategic and key 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.
- 2.14 The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for approving the Risk Management Strategy, and the Risk Management Group monitors the effective implementation of the strategy.
- 2.15 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.
- 2.16 The Audit and Governance Committee has continued to review the Council's Constitution.
- 2.17 [PLACEHOLDER – REVIEW OF IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF A&G USING CIPFA SELF ASSESSMENT OF BEST PRACTICE – TO BE COMPLETED DURING MAY 2023]
- 2.18 The Chairman 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](mailto:democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk).

