

Report



Governance and Audit Committee

Part 1

Date: 28 March 2024

Subject Governance and Audit Committee Self-Assessment

Purpose To set out the draft skills and knowledge self-assessment questionnaire for Government and Audit Committee Members to complete to inform the development of a learning and development plan for the Committee.

Author Strategic Director, Transformation and Corporate

Ward All

Summary Establishing a training programme and ongoing support for Governance and Audit Committee members is essential to ensure that they can confidently and effectively discharge their responsibilities. Exact needs will depend on the composition of the committee and members' existing knowledge and experience.

A self-assessment questionnaire, based on the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) publication 'Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities & Police', is attached to this report. It is proposed that members of this Committee complete and return the questionnaire in order to assess the existing skills, knowledge and areas of expertise of members and to identify any gaps or training requirements.

The results will assist in developing a learning and development plan for the Committee.

Proposal The Committee is asked:

- i. To consider and note the contents of this report;
- ii. To agree the wording of the draft self-assessment questionnaire which is appended to this report;
- iii. To agree a timescale for completion of the questionnaire by members of this Committee; and
- iv. To resolve to consider the questionnaire responses at a future meeting.

Action by Interim Chief Internal Auditor, Governance and Audit Committee Members

Timetable Immediate

Background

Local government bodies are expected to meet high standards of governance and accountability. The Governance and Audit Committee provides a specialist forum to support and monitor the authority in the areas of governance, risk management, external audit, internal audit and financial reporting.

Under CIPFA Guidance it is recommended practice for Governance Audit committees to review and assess themselves annually. The results of the assessment should be available in the annual report from the committee.

The self-assessment form asks Governance and Audit Committee members to consider ten statements and to indicate whether their level of knowledge / experience is either 'good', 'satisfactory' or 'little' knowledge in relation to each.

The questionnaire also asks Governance and Audit Committee members to indicate what knowledge and skills they have which will add value to the work of the Governance and Audit Committee. It is proposed that Committee Members will be given the opportunity to complete their self-assessments and that a report on the data collated through the self-assessment will be brought to the Committee at a future meeting.

The responses to the questionnaire will remain confidential and the report shared at Committee would be an anonymised summary of the data collated. Information collated under the self-assessment questionnaire would be managed in line with requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations.

Appendix 1 – Draft Self-Assessment Form

Financial Summary

There are no direct costs associated with this report.

Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
The Governance and Audit Committee is not effective in supporting the authority to address weaknesses in its governance, risk, and control arrangements at an early stage.	H	L	Self-Assessment Questionnaire to be adopted for Governance and Audit Committee Members to complete on an annual basis. Learning and Development plan to be developed based on the data collected through the self-assessment.	Audit Manager

*Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Annual Governance Statement

Robust governance arrangements increase the chances that all of the Council's priorities and plans will be implemented successfully.

Options Available and considered

1. To consider the contents of this report and the draft self-assessment questionnaire and agree a timeline for Committee Members to complete the questionnaire.
2. To amend the self-assessment questionnaire and agree a timeline for Committee Members to complete the questionnaire.

Preferred Option and Why

1. Option 1 is the preferred option.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no financial implications arising from the proposal for members of the committee to complete the self-assessment questionnaire.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

The Governance and Audit Committee has a number of functions prescribed by statute which relate to the oversight of various Council procedures, including in relation to auditing, complaints handling, financial procedures and risk management. The completion of this questionnaire by members of the Committee will assist in identifying areas where training or further development of skills is required with a view to ensuring that the Committee is able to fulfil its constitutional and statutory functions.

Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation

As stated in the report, it is good practice for the Governance and Audit Committee to self-assess its effectiveness and identify areas of improvement. This supports the Council's approach to delivering continuous improvement and the Council's Annual Governance Statement. Being self-reflective also supports the Council's approach to meeting the 5 ways of working of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (see below). There are no HR implications with this paper.

Scrutiny Committees

Not Applicable.

Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessment

For this report, a full Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment is not required to be undertaken. This is because this report is not seeking any strategic decisions or policy changes, with its purpose being to present Governance and Audit Committee with a draft self-assessment questionnaire and process for consideration of the data collated by the Committee at a future date.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 and its 5 ways of working principles this report supports:

Long Term – Having effective governance arrangements ensures that the opportunities and risks that emerge consider the long-term impact on service users and communities.

Preventative – Identifying opportunities for further development will ensure the Committee is able to continue to develop the collective skill set required for effective oversight of future Governance and Audit work programmes.

Collaborative – Governance arrangements are managed in collaboration with officers within service areas, Corporate Management Team and the Council's Cabinet.

Involvement – Involving Governance & Audit Committee enables committee members to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses to improve the effectiveness of the committee to fulfil its requirements as set out in the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Integration – Governance arrangements are integrated throughout the Council. Robust and effective governance arrangements support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and legislative duties.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Background Papers

Not Applicable

Dated: 22nd March 2024