

Minutes of the Meeting of GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
held Hybrid - Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron / remotely via video
conference on Tuesday, 27 September 2022

PRESENT: Mr Alan Davies (Chair) Councillors Elizabeth Evans, Wyn Evans and Gareth Lloyd together with Mrs Caroline Whitby

Also in attendance: Councillors Bryan Davies, Gareth Davies and Keith Henson (Cabinet Members) Rhodri Evans and Wyn Thomas

Officers in attendance: Ms Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer-Legal and Governance & Monitoring Officer; Mr Russell Hughes-Pickering, Corporate Lead Officer – Economy & Regeneration, Mr Geraint Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer – People & Organisation, Mrs Meinir Ebbsworth, Corporate Lead Officer Schools, Ms Marie-Neige Hadfield, Complaints & FOI Manager, Mr Alun Williams- Corporate Lead Officer – Policy & Performance Mr Rob Starr- Performance and Research Manager, Ms Nia Jones, Corporate Manager – Democratic Services, Mr Harry Dimmack, Governance Officer, Mrs Alison Hodgson , Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer, Ms Stephanie Land, Senior Auditor Mrs Julie Brown , Audit Manager, Mrs Dana Jones, Democratic Services and Standards Officer

(9:30am -12:50pm)

1 Apologies

Councillors Endaf Edwards, Maldwyn Lewis and Mark Strong together with Mr Liam Hull and Mrs Alex Jenkins, Corporate Manager - Internal Audit apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

2 Disclosures of Personal / Prejudicial interest

None.

3 Personal Matters

Congratulations were extended to Hannah Rees on the birth of her second son, both were doing well.

4 To confirm the Minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 6 June 2022 and to consider any matters arising from those Minutes

It was AGREED to confirm as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held 06 June 2022

5 Governance and Audit Committee Meeting Actions Log

Consideration was given to the Governance and Audit Committee Meeting Actions Log.

It was AGREED to note the content as presented.

6 Procedure

It was AGREED that item 8 and 9 be considered prior to 7 and 8 on the agenda as the officer presenting was not in attendance.

7 Regulator & Inspectorate Reports & Updates

Consideration was given to the Regulatory & Inspectorate Reports and Updates Item. The report sets out Regulator and Inspectorate Reports and updates and had three parts:

- a) Audit Wales quarterly update to Governance and Audit Committee;
- b) Any local risk work issued/published since the last Governance and Audit Committee meeting
- c) Audit Wales National Reports

It was AGREED to note the current position.

8 Council Responses to Regulator & Inspectorate Reports

Consideration was given to the Report that sets out the Council's responses regarding Regulator and Inspectorate Reports and progress made regarding proposals and recommendations.

This Report had two parts:
Current Position

- a) Council tracker of Regulator/Inspectorate proposals for improvement and recommendations
- b) Other Council related matters

It was AGREED to note the current position.

9 External Quality Assessment Report

Consideration was given to the External Quality Assessment Report. It was reported that the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) became effective from 1 April 2013 and introduced a requirement for an external assessment of all internal audit services, which must be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified, independent reviewer from outside the organisation.

A review team from the Isle of Anglesey County Council, consisting of the Head of Audit and Risk and the Principal Auditor, undertook an evaluation of Ceredigion County Council's self-assessment between May and July 2022. This report sets out the findings of their assessment.

It was AGREED to note the content of the Internal Audit External Quality Assessment.

The Corporate Lead Officer-Legal and Governance & Monitoring Officer thanked the Head of Audit and Risk and the Principal Auditor for her assistance and guidance to the Corporate Manager – Internal Audit, and also to the Internal Audit team for their work.

10 CMIA Response to Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn External Quality Assessment

Consideration was given to the CMIA Response to Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn External Quality Assessment. It was reported that the PSIAS and CIPFA's Local Government Application Note supersede the 2006 Code for Internal Audit and came into force from April 2013.

The PSIAS and Application Note must be complied with in order to ensure proper internal audit practices were applied. The Application Note contains a checklist which has been developed to satisfy the requirements set out in PSIAS 1311 and 1312 for periodic self-assessments as part of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Program.

It incorporates the requirements of the PSIAS as well as the Application Note in order to give comprehensive coverage of both documents.

The Isle of Anglesey's Internal Audit team undertook a peer review of Ceredigion CMIA's 2021/22 self-assessment between May – July 2022 to provide an external assessment of the service's compliance, as required by PSIAS.

The Corporate Lead Officer-Legal and Governance & Monitoring Officer endorsed the recommendation that the Corporate Manager-Internal Audit should complete the professional Audit qualification and was confident it would be completed within 12 months. There had also been a delay in obtaining this qualification due to the pandemic.

It was AGREED to note the report and service's response to the Internal Audit Section's External Quality Assessment.

11 Estyn Inspections, Summer term 2022

Consideration was given to the Report on Estyn Inspections, Summer Term 2022.

It was AGREED to note the information presented and that the reports were very positive.

It was reported that the press had emphasised on one recommendation in the Penglais School report; and not the report as a whole which was positive.

12 Internal Audit Progress Report 2022-2023 (Quarter 1)

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Manager-Internal Audit on The Internal Audit Progress Report Quarter 1. The report had been presented to ensure that the Committee was satisfied that the Internal Audit Section was undertaking sufficient and appropriate work in order to provide a realistic assurance at year-end, whilst adding value and assisting the Council in achieving its objectives.

It was AGREED to note the work undertaken and current position of the Internal Audit Service

13 Internal Audit Self-Assessment 2021-22

Consideration was given to the Internal Audit Self-Assessment 2021-22. It was reported that the PSIAS and CIPFA's Local Government Application Note supersede the 2006 Code for Internal Audit and came into force from April 2013. The PSIAS and Application Note must be complied with in order to ensure proper internal audit practices were applied.

The Application Note contained a checklist which had been developed to satisfy the requirements set out in PSIAS 1311 and 1312 for periodic self-assessments as part of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Program (QAIP). It incorporates the requirements of the PSIAS as well as the Application Note in order to give comprehensive coverage of both documents.

It was AGREED to note the content of the self assessment.

14 AGS Progress Update Report

Consideration was given to the AGS Progress Update Report. The report had been presented in order to present an update on the progress of the Annual Governance Statement 2021-2022, as well as an update regarding progress with the 2022-2023 Annual Governance Statement.

It was AGREED to note the current position.

15 Annual Report of Compliments, Complaints and Freedom of Information (2021-22)

Consideration was given to the Annual Report of Compliments, Complaints and Freedom of Information (2021-2022). The report had been presented in order to provide the Governance and Audit Committee with a comprehensive overview of the Compliments, Complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) activity (including Environmental Information Regulations - EIR) received by the Authority during 2021 - 2022. This report also provided information about complaints referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales during the reporting period.

A request was made if it was possible to include in the report the number of complaints that had not been resolved in stage 1 that had gone to stage 2, and if these complaints had reference to communication or the lack of it.

It was AGREED to note and endorse the contents of the Annual Report of Compliments, Complaints and Freedom of Information Activity – 2021/2022 and note the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2021-2022.

A letter would also be sent from the Leader of the Council to the PSOW Office requesting information regarding the recording of complaints to the Ombudsman, particularly in cases whereby they are deemed 'Premature' due to the complainant not having exhausted the Council's own complaints processes.

Members complimented the service on their excellent work and report.

16 Corporate Risk Register - Q1

It was reported that regular reports were provided to the Governance and Audit Committee regarding the Council's Corporate Risk Register to provide on-going information and assurance that risks identified by senior managers are managed appropriately. This reinforces the Governance and Audit Committee role of providing independent assurance to Council of the appropriate management of the Corporate Risk Register.

All risks had been reviewed and include updated commentary. The scores remain unchanged for all risks. However, several risks have had changes to mitigating actions to reflect the changing response. These were:-

R003: Corporate Improvement and Performance

R006: Through Age & Well-being Programme

R009: Information Management & Cyber Security Resilience

R015: Support Local Food Business, Maintain Safety

R017: Safeguarding

R019: Climate Change and Coastal Erosion / Flooding

R020: Ash Dieback

R021: Phosphates

It was AGREED:-

(i) to note the current position;

(ii) (ii) that the Corporate Lead Officer – Policy & Performance would convey the views of Members to the Leadership Group that Recruitment and Retention should be considered for inclusion on the risk register as several services were unable to recruit; the Leader stated he would also convey these views to the LG;

(iii) that further consideration should be given to the workload of Food Safety team due to the number of outstanding inspections by the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and

(vi) that further clarification would be sought on how the Council monitored the number of Ash Dieback; and reported to Members following the meeting accordingly.

An update was provided by the Corporate Lead Officer – Policy & Performance on the reasoning that Brexit was removed from the Corporate Risk Register. It was agreed that in future that the rationale on the reasons risks were removed be provided to the Committee.

17 Ceredigion County Council Draft Self-Assessment Report 2021/22

Consideration was given to the Ceredigion County Council Draft Self-Assessment Report 2021/22. It was reported that Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 introduced a new Self-Assessment based performance regime for Principal Councils.

The Act also sets out the integral role that the Governance and Audit Committee play in the Self-Assessment Process. This role involves the Committee:

- Receiving the Council’s draft Self-Assessment Report
- Reviewing the draft Self-Assessment Report and making recommendations on the conclusions or actions the Council intends to take
- Receiving the final Self-Assessment report when it is published, including commentary on why it accepted or did not accept the recommendations made by the Governance and Audit Committee.

It was reported that the Draft Self-Assessment Report had now been produced as presented.

The Report had been developed by assessing a wide variety of evidence including internal reports and reviews, external regulatory and inspection reports and crucially engagement and consultation activities. The Council adopted a set of key questions or “Key Lines of Enquiry” to ensure the process is focused on outcomes, the organisation-wide view of performance and is evidence-based. Workshops were run during June and July with Members and Officers of the Council to identify current performance, the opportunities that exist for improvement and the specific actions we intend to take.

Although the Self-Assessment Report was the key output from the process the work on improving outcomes was an ongoing year-round activity. Throughout the year consultations were conducted in support of self-assessment, evidence collated to inform the workshops, actions delivered in the Self-Assessment action plan and their progress monitored towards completion.

- It was important to note that the Report discharges the requirements of both:
- The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 – the duty to report on performance
 - The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – to set and review progress against our Corporate Well-being Objectives

Timetable:		
Draft Self-Assessment Report	Governance and Audit Committee	21 September
Self-Assessment Report	Governance and Audit Committee	17 November
Self-Assessment Report	The Auditor General for Wales His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales The Welsh Ministers	17 November
Self-Assessment Report	Cabinet	6 December
Self-Assessment Report	Council	15 December

Following questions from the floor, it was AGREED to endorse the Ceredigion County Council Draft Self-Assessment Report 2021/22 as presented.

18 **Forward Work Programme**

It was AGREED to note the content of the Forward Work Programme as presented subject to:-

- (i) inviting all Members to the 17 November as the Committee would be considering the Annual Financial Statement in detail, and this would be particularly useful for new Members of the Council; and
- (ii) that the Report on the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) was to be presented at the 19 January meeting

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held
on 17 November 2022**

Chairman: _____

Date: _____